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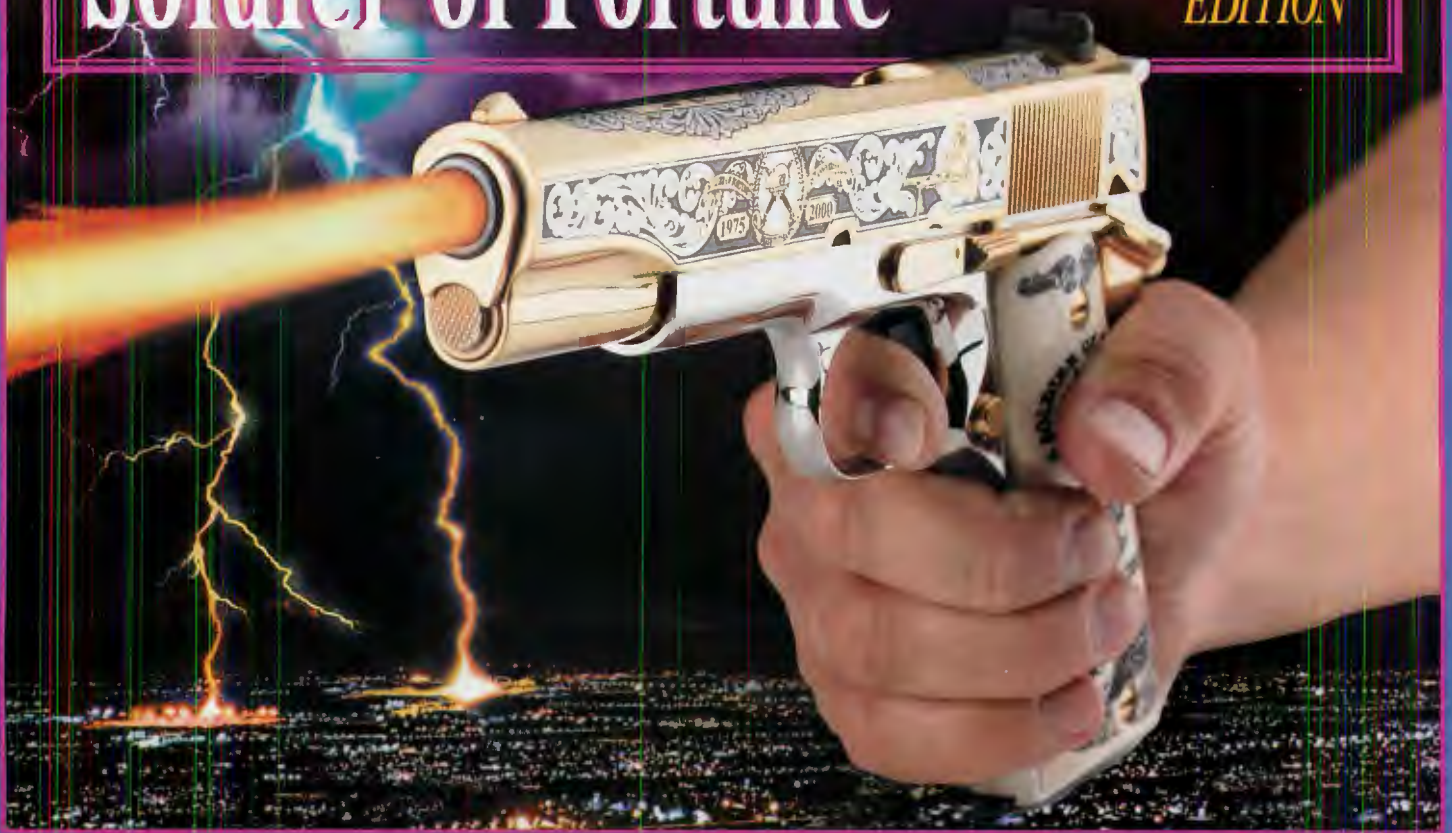
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ZUMA PICTUREDESK

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J. Bartlett

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OMEGA PROVING GROUND

Springfield M1A Super Match Custom by John Culbertson
A former Marine sniper tests out Springfield's new .308 NATO and finds it, in a word, "superb."

WHEN EVERY MAN STEPS FORWARD

 by Col. Mike Peck (Ret.)

"Jitterbugging" was not to Vietnam what it was to the 1940s. Chopper assaults into hot — or cold — LZs provided potent adrenaline surges, but ops such as these saw few, if any, volunteers.

A LETTER FROM TIM MCVEIGH

Read a frank exchange of ideas and philosophy relating to the militarization of American law enforcement between McVeigh and *SOF* Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown.

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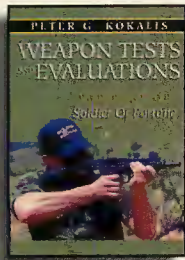
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courtesy Boeing



WEAPON TESTS AND EVALUATIONS

The Best of Soldier Of Fortune

by Peter G. Kokalis

For more than 20 years, Peter G. Kokalis has traveled the globe – often risking enemy fire – to bring his readers more exclusives than any other writer on small arms. In this comprehensive anthology of his best articles from *SOF* and *Fighting Firearms* magazines, you'll get authoritative reviews and detailed information on dozens of handguns, rifles, SMGs, sniper rifles and shotguns. You'll also travel with Kokalis as he trains El Salvador's Atlacatl Battalion and goes where no Western writer has gone before for his groundbreaking eight-part series examining the weapons of the Chinese army. This is a must-read for anyone interested in modern weapons. 8 1/2 x 11, softcover, photos, 408 pp. #10012540

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BOWIES, BIG KNIVES, AND THE BEST OF BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

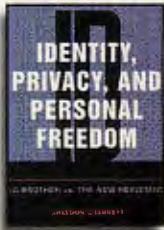
This book binds the outspoken observations and expert advice of master bladesmith and blade combat expert Bill Bagwell under one cover for the first time. Study the design and use of Bowies and other big knives and learn which blade designs and combat techniques stand up to the rigors of battle and the test of time. 8 1/2 x 11, softcover, 184 pp. #10012078 \$30.00



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by A.G. Hawke

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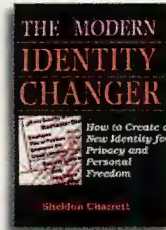


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Big Brother vs. the New Resistance

by Sheldon Charrett

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by Sheldon Charrett

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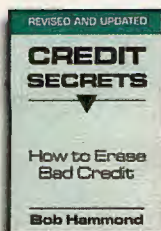


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by Scott French

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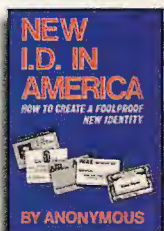
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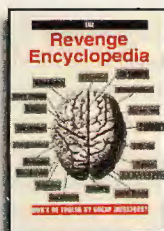


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by Anonymous

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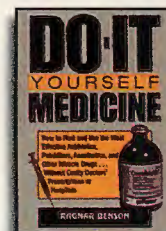


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by Robert K. Brown

An Open Letter to the Attorney General

Dear Sir:

You face many challenges you as you preside over the Department of Justice following eight years of Janet Reno's incompetent, and possibly corrupt, stewardship.

President George W. Bush has rightly focused his cabinet officers on the future, but as Attorney General, you have unique responsibilities. These include reviewing actions taken by your predecessor that raise serious issues of probable misconduct.

One such case is OKBOMB — the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City on 19 April 1995.

That Ms. Reno failed to carry out her constitutional and legal duties in this matter is beyond reasonable dispute. Why she failed is for you to determine.

In conducting such an inquiry, you must rely upon a trusted member of your personal staff, or an outside advisor untainted by the corruption of the Reno era.

The inquiry should focus on two of Ms. Reno's claims that remain part of your department's official record.

1. Federal law enforcement had no credible prior warning of threats to blow up federal buildings in Oklahoma City prior to 19 April 1995.

2. The crime was solved with the arrest and conviction of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, and the plea agreements of Michael and Lori Fortier.

Both these claims are false, and can be proven so if you have a trusted agent take the following actions.

1. Review the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) file (number A74 602 286) on Andreas Carl Strassmeir, a German national and former illegal resident alien. In November 1994, according to federal law enforcement investigation records, Strassmeir advocated these actions — "his plans are to forcibly act to destroy the U.S. Government with direct actions such as

assassinations, bombings, and mass shootings." (This information was contained in case files officially designated a "TERRORIST/EXTREMIST" investigative project.)

2. Order that Louis Freeh, Director of the FBI, provide all records involving FBI intervention to stop the planned arrest of Strassmeir by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in February 1995.

3. Determine the contents of Strassmeir's CIA file. Interview Linda Cippriani (an attorney in the CIA's Office of General Counsel) and Beth Wilkinson (then a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney assigned to OKBOMB case). An official FBI report of a telephone interview with Ms. Cippriani stated that she had provided the results "of her agency's records check to determine if STRASSMEIR ... had ever worked for or been affiliated with her agency" to "Beth Wilkinson at the OKBOMB Task Force in Denver, Colorado." (The FBI questioned "various Federal government law enforcement and intelligence agencies to determine if Andreas Carl Strassmeir was ever a cooperating witness or confidential source." Only the CIA reported that it had relevant records.)

4. Interview Abner Mikva, a former Chicago congressman, federal judge and White House counsel during the Clinton era. Ask Mikva what is so extraordinarily sensitive about the OKBOMB case that he dared the Congress to question Janet Reno's handling of this terrorist attack? Mikva raised the issue of the OKBOMB case in the 2 March 1998 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*. He stated, "If Chairman Hyde [Henry Hyde, then Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee] starts asking about all the dollars they spent in Oklahoma City, that can compromise some very, very delicate information. How much of that does he really want to get into?"

Mr. Hyde declined to pick up Mikva's gauntlet. Will you also pass, or will you see that justice is finally done in the OKBOMB case? ✂

Robert K. Brown

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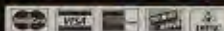
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Caracas Calling



Greetings from Venezuela. I want to congratulate and thank you and your staff on the great work you do in keeping the liberty and rights of common people. Many people (especially from countries like mine) don't realize that liberty has to be earned every day and that the U.S. is to be thanked for many of the rights we enjoy.

I usually buy your magazine from the newsstand (from time to time) and found it extremely patriotic (for you Americans) and (generally) I tend to think like you on many topics.

Keep up the good work.

Carlos Rodriguez
Via e-mail

Paint Ball Warriors

I am a U.S. Marine and a supporter of gun rights in the United States, I have been thinking of a business venture that I thought SOF mag might be interested in. I assume that many of your subscribers are pro-military and/or veteran and also legal gun holders in the United States and abroad. This is the market in which my idea would flourish.

I have been a paint ball enthusiast for several years along with many of my friends. We have always discussed the success of a war simulation paint ball league. I believe that your readers would be interested in a sport like this. I have worked out many of the rules, regulations and necessary costs that it would take to form a league like this nation-wide. The majority of the league could be administered through the internet. Using the many paint ball outlets across the country, gun enthusiasts

could simulate platoons, squads, etc. in war games and ongoing programs. These programs could last for several days over the weekends for recreation, or weekdays if it is a league tournament. I believe that there is a strong market for this and would like to hear your input. The reason I contacted SOF mag is because I thought of using the league name as "Soldier of Fortune" or "SOF." Please contact me with the information below.

Donathan Harris
Project Coordinator
One Network
210 N 4th St., Suite 300
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 271-8211

Considering the current high level of interest in paint ball, and its value as both a recreational and training medium, there may well be a need for such a league. We are publishing your contact information in order that those with interest, or information on what similar efforts have already been undertaken, may contact you directly. The trademarked names "Soldier of Fortune" and "SOF" (property of Omega Group, Ltd.) have been licensed before for such things as a TV show, foreign-language editions, and currently for video games, so a licensing agreement may well be possible for a paint-ball league or something similar, as well. Your e-mail has been passed on to the legal department, so they can respond to you directly.

Rhodesian Reading



I have been reading SOF since 1979 and have followed the Rhodesia stories with great interest. I even wound up marrying a girl who grew up there. It greatly saddens me to see what is happening in

that once beautiful country with the Mugabe regime. Even his right-hand man calls himself Hitler.

Now, I fear the signs are ripe for genocide in Zimbabwe. From creating a scapegoat out of the minority whites for the sins of the leadership; to attempting to force Supreme Court justices to retire or resign, to the latest — the expulsion of foreign news correspondents.

Here is the web page of a British newspaper that has been following the troubles in Rhodesia: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/zimbabwe>.

Keep the word out... the people of this country need international exposure lest it become like Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Congo, etc.

Branden L. Sanders

African Reading



Regarding Dave Kennedy's e-mailed query about finding older books on South Africa and Angola in your April 2001 issue, two further suggestions for him (and anyone else interested): There are at least a couple of websites that are associations of used book dealers with their inventories on line. I've had good results from: abebooks.com and alibis.com. You may search by author or title, and they will return info on who has copies, the edition and condition, and contact info to order.

Steve Olsen
Via e-mail

Thanks, Steve. Once again, SOF's eclectic readership comes to the fore.

Continued on page 14



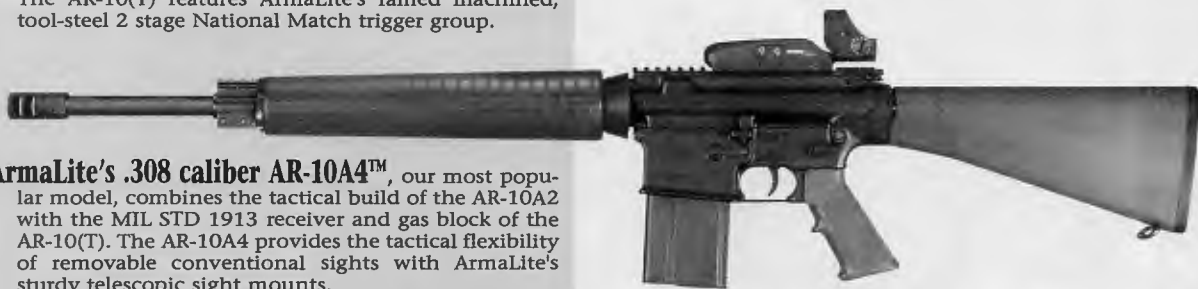
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Recounting The Election



In reference to your "Recount This" in the Bulletin Board of your March 2001 issue, I would like to point out the importance of the electoral college.

If Gore actually won the popular vote (which I doubt), Gore might be president today if it were not for the Electoral College. Al Gore won in many of the more heavily populated areas such as New York and Los Angeles.

The purpose of the Electoral College is to keep the more populated areas of this country from dictating over the lesser populated areas of the country.

Let's keep the Electoral College.

Ward Lawrence
Garland, Texas

The carefully crafted system of checks and balances set up by the founding fathers had many impediments set in place against mob-ocracy. To be sure, the Electoral College was primarily set up because the technology of the day, which at the time did not even have adequate road nets, pretty well precluded a direct popular vote being a workable idea — but your point is well-made: It also tended to be a further guard against a "tyranny of the majority." Further balancing the scales was accomplished with our bicameral legislature having two senators from every state, no matter its size or population. Experience of the day with direct popular votes in other fledgling democracies, without any steady influences set in place, had not been too good.

KFOR, What For?

What a mess this whole incident between the K-Albanian extremists and the Macedonians has caused. As you know the Macedonians have closed the border to all traffic into Kosovo. The restriction is absolute and is already having an impact. For example, we expect to run out of diesel and gasoline in less than three days in the province. Today I observed the US KFOR flying sling loads under CH-47s north from Macedonia, so it looks like the border

closure is starting to affect them as well.

The US KFOR must be so embarrassed that this is occurring on the border in their sector; the leadership finally kicked our boys out of the Camp Bondsteel Burger King and put them in front of some BBC and CNN television reporters. To say I was stunned is an understatement. For the most part our guys are locked down in Camps Bondsteel and Monteith and seldom venture close to the border. Today I was in General Jankovic (the border crossing between Macedonia and Kosovo) and saw the Brits, Greeks, and Poles and there wasn't a U.S. troop in sight. I am really surprised to see the Brits because they have their own sector (MNB-C) to take care of. This must be stretching them pretty thin to work the U.S. sector (MNB-S) as well.

Considering that the U.S. public/media is unwilling to take the risk of accepting any casualties in what must be viewed as a European problem area, has made our boys the laughing stock of the other contingents in the mission. The more I see how ineffective this policy has made our troops, the more I support a withdrawal of our guys from the mission. If we feel that this mission isn't worth injury or death to even one soldier, we need to get out of there, the sooner the better.

(name withheld)

Via e-mail

(the correspondent is a former field-grade army officer, under contract to the UN in Kosovo)

Black Beret Brouhaha



Few topics of symbolic importance have raised as much interest as the matter of issuing Ranger-style black berets to soldiers at large. The wires hum daily with news that "they can't be made fast enough, so they're being made in the PRC," and "the new White House has the Pentagon rethinking the matter," and as we go to press, "the Rangers have opted for tan as their new unique color." Overwhelmingly, response coming to SOF editorial offices has been negative, but herewith we offer a selection of letters from various viewpoints.

December 24, 1966 was the best Christmas Eve I ever had. I gave birth



to my first child. His name was John Mark Price. "John" means "gift of God" and he truly was.

Because he was the oldest of four children all born within four years, more was expected of him at an early age. As he grew he expected more of himself ... He was well liked by everyone because he had a reputation for honesty, hard work and sticking up for the underdog.

December 24, 1989 was the worst Christmas Eve I ever had. The body of PFC John Mark Price was returned to us on what would have been his 23rd birthday. He had been killed in Panama's Operation Just Cause. "Mark" means "the defender," "brave." When my husband died, Mark was just starting his sophomore year at college. He finished that semester and in the spring ... my three sons signed up to serve their country in the Army. Mark knew he wanted to serve as a Ranger.

The recruiter told him he would have to work to get in the Ranger program and it would not be easy but that was not a deterrent to Mark. He knew he had to get his airborne training and go through the Ranger Indoctrination Program just to go to Ranger school. And he did. He was stationed at Ft. Lewis. On Sunday evenings he would call me before I left for my night shift at the hospital and tell me he was worried that he wouldn't be good enough to be a Ranger. I have a picture in my living room of him in uniform with his beret and the biggest smile you have ever seen. That black beret was a symbol of something special to him. Now the black beret will be given to every soldier.

First it was to boost morale. A head cover will not do anything for morale. Decent pay so the military families don't have to use WIC, food stamps or stand in food lines would help morale. Also, enough decent housing for their families.

The next thing we hear is, it would unify the Army (unless you can't pass a test on Army history and then everyone will know you aren't as book smart as the other soldiers). Really, I thought it was an Army of "one" now. Also how do you unify when the green and maroon berets are kept special for those men that earned their special color?

The last thing was, it won't show dirt. I wonder, does it still show the "blood" of those Rangers that have

fought and those who are still willing to fight for our country? The black beret doesn't make the soldier special; the soldier makes the black beret special. Please keep the black beret for those who have earned it.

Diane Price
(Mother of PFC John Mark Price)



I've been reading in the papers how it's been a victory for Rangers. The Army gets to wear Ranger Black Berets, and Rangers get to wear Tan Berets. Tan Berets. Not even a primary color, like red, green, blue or yellow. Tan. Some sort of neutral earth-tone color. Well, a couple more years of "victories" like this for the Rangers, and Rangers will be wearing little pink danglers.

Seems to me there are a whole lot of people in Washington determined to surrender before anyone gets hurt. As you know, reinforcements grew every day on Capitol Hill, outraged over maybe millions of newly issued Chinese-made American uniforms; support began to stream in to at least half the controversial edict while a review was conducted, and, in fact, a halt was ordered. Then, suddenly, before any hearing or inquiries could be organized or conducted, a grateful nation is told on Friday afternoon that "Rangers have emerged victorious." They just have to give away their hats and wear these cute tan ones from China.

Well, this one stinks like something that hasn't been washed. I figure an Army-wide issue of any essential uniform element means way more than a "couple million" of anything. The eventual numbers will be way, way more than that. So what I want to know is who, exactly, is being paid, here and in China, for this multimillion-dollar, multi-year deal? Let's cut the crap. Eight years of Clinton has made America very skeptical of any Washington "victories." This one doesn't smell too good, either.

I have a feeling tan berets aren't going to be very popular with the troops this fashion season, do you?

Jim Coyne
(former 3rd RTC, TSB, Ft. Benning 1969)

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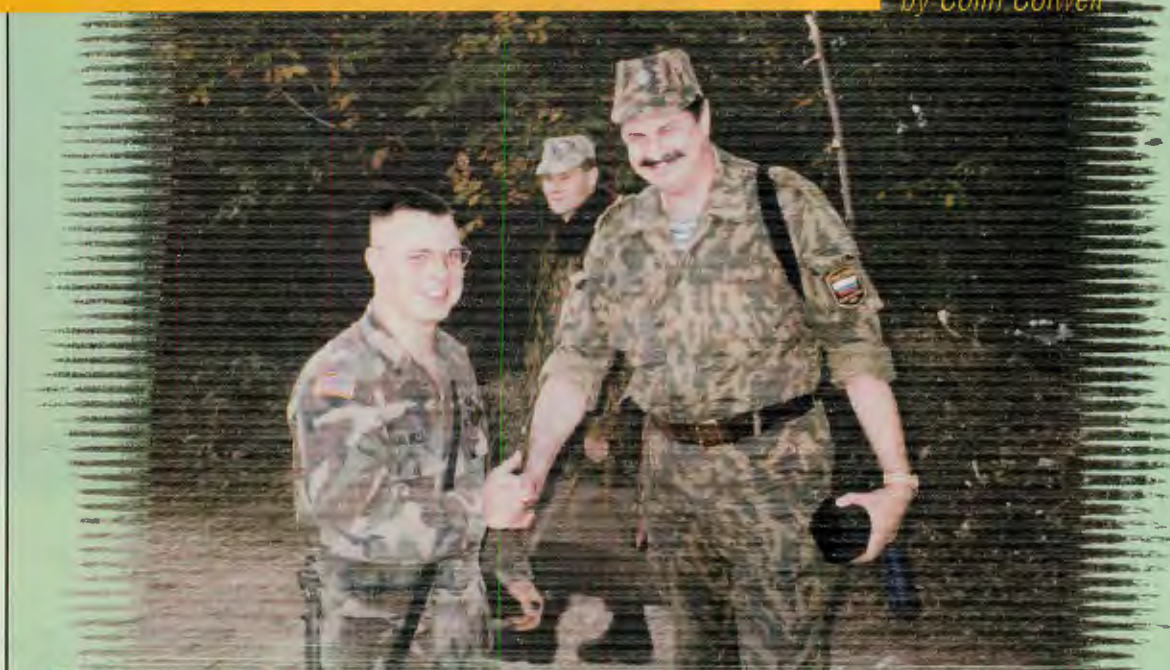



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I Was There

by Colin Colwell

courtesy author



War Zone Priorities

From late September through late October 1996, my PSYOP team was assigned the additional mission of supporting a company from the 2nd Russian ABN BDE in the northeast section of Bosnia. It was an area that had seen some of the heaviest fighting during the war; an area that was still fighting the war, albeit on different terms. The Bosnian Muslims, in violation of the Dayton Peace Accords and without approval from the UNHCR (United Nations High Council of Refugees), pushed eastward over the ZOS (Zone Of Separation) back into republic of Serbska territory in an attempt to reclaim the village of Jusici (you-see-chee). The Serb police responded in typical fashion, and daily riots broke out. The Russian contingent was forced to set up camp on the outskirts to keep the Bosnians from moving any farther east, and to keep the Serbs from cracking too many heads. But the Serbs, ever persistent to keep the Bosnians from getting a toehold in their country, still had a few tricks up their sleeves.

I walked away from the circle of soldiers, mostly Russian with a few Americans, my head aching since it had been five years since I studied the Russian language, and speaking it all day long was very taxing. I sat on the hood of my Hummer and stared off into the distance, trying to relax. I felt like I was on top of the world, but not necessarily in the good way. Jusici was halfway up the largest hill in the area, and we were camped just above the village. The view across the countryside was spectacular. Hills rolled into the distance like swells on the ocean, then, just on the horizon, the real mountains began to stretch skyward. The sheer beauty of the sunsets over the mountains and lush green valleys was a direct con-

Me and the Russian BDE Operations officer whom I had just finished briefing on U.S. PSYOP techniques — unclassified info only, of course. Imagine that: A U.S. soldier briefing a Russian on propaganda.

tradition to the madness of the people: the Orthodox Christian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims; both sides always looking for ways to provoke, to kill, to destroy the other. It is the kind of hatred that leads seemingly normal people to commit genocide. It was early October, so the leaves were in full color. It hadn't rained for a few days, and had been relatively quite since we arrived, so life wasn't so bad.

Approximately 100 Bosnians had disregarded UN resettlement protocol and took matters into their own hands. They sneaked across the boarder into Serb territory and set up shop in their alleged old village. My PSYOP team, with frequent loudspeaker broadcasts and old-fashioned face-to-face communication, was there trying to convince the Muslim villagers to leave "their" homes again, and to convince the nearby Serb civilians that we were containing the Bosnians.

After the nightly patrol through the village to make sure there was nothing funny going on — by either side, the Russians set up their nightly watch, and the rest of us bedded down.

Kabam! The explosion rocked the ground and nearly bounced me out of my hooch. What the fuck? I thought. I checked my watch: 0330, threw on my boots and gear, grabbed my rifle, and joined the steadily growing circle of soldiers. The Russians, excited for obvious reasons, were jabbering too quickly for me to make out much, so I only caught

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every fifth or sixth word. "Big explosion ... don't know where ... no one hurt ... no, stay here until morning."

I found the American liaison officer, Major Nash (his Russian was much better than mine).

"What's up, sir?" I asked.

"We figure without knowing what the fuck that was, and who the fuck is out there, we're better off waiting until first light to check it out. Besides, the blast came from over there," he gestured to the east. I nodded knowingly; the village was to the west of our position, so there was probably no immediate danger to the Bosnians.

"Okay, sir, grab me in the morning when you're ready t'go," I said over my shoulder as I walked back to my cot.

It was still mid-morning when we returned to the area of explosion for the second time. Five houses had been blown to bits. Luckily, they had been uninhabited since they were too far from the village to offer any protection. The tactic of blowing up Muslim houses to keep them from being occupied was a typical Serb maneuver. It made a very bold move about what lengths they were willing to go to keep the Muslims out. As an added bonus, it didn't kill anyone, so we couldn't offi-

cially blame them. The excitement had worn down, so most of the Russian soldiers had wandered back to our base camp. It was just my interpreter, Marin, the major, the Russian commander, a captain, and me.

"Hey, Sarge, take these coordinates back to camp, have Jones radio them back to headquarters."

"Yes, sir." I began backtracking the way we had come in, not wanting to trudge across open ground that had yet to be checked for mines — we were right on the former front lines, after all. Three Bosnians had gotten so bold as to leave the village and were poking around near one of the flattened houses. There was an American reporter there, Mike Kirsch, with his video camera, filming the rubble and interviewing the villagers. I looked to the ground momentarily, always careful of where I was stepping.

"Stop! Stop! On the ground!" Serbo-Croatian is similar to Russian, so I understood most of what was being yelled. I looked up to see that 10 Serbian MUPs (ministry of defense police), in full body armor and AK-47s, had the three Muslim men face-down on the ground with a rifle in the back of their heads. The reporter, camera up and still rolling, was backpedaling

towards me. I recognized three of the MUPs. They were from Zvornik, a city in my AO. I had a good relationship with them; inasmuch as I bought them a few drinks when I could and didn't ask too many prying questions.

As the seriousness of the situation took hold of me, my whole world seemed to slow down. Seconds became minutes, minutes became hours. In this heightened state of awareness I was able to take in all that was happening, and run through several courses of action in only a few seconds.

I walked into the middle of the melee, still not really sure what I should do, all the while the math was not adding up in my head: Ten AKs versus one M203 did not make me feel very comfortable.

"What are you doing?" I grabbed the arm of one of the MUPs I recognized. He was one of the few good ones I knew of. He looked slightly embarrassed and spun away from me without making eye contact or saying a thing. By now, four of the MUPs had focused their attention on the reporter and had backed him into a corner. I couldn't understand exactly what was being

Continued on page 87



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BACK ISSUES



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WEAPONS: return of the BAR; **AIRCRAFT:** T&E of Longbow Apache; **BATF:** rogues' gallery of lying supervisors and agents; **VIETNAM WAR:** declassified secrets of SOG's legendary Mad Dog; **IRAQ:** Saddam's war against Kurds; **BURMA:** training Karen snipers.

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SOLO OUT! #235 MAY 97

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#238 AUGUST 97

EL SALVADOR: Zona Rosa massacre update; police and military battle drug thugs; **MIDDLE EAST:** anatomy of a Mossad assassination; **WEAPONS:** Russia's secret battle rifle; Kahf's semiauto pistols; **RUSSIA:** downsizing military hits hard.



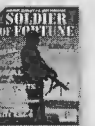
#239 SEPTEMBER 97
KOREA: SOF on DMZ; **WEAPONS:** RPG-7; new South African Vektor 40mm AGL; **VICARIOUS THRILLS:** flying with USAF Thunderbirds; **MERCYS:** European "advisers" in Zaire; **INDONESIA:** civic action or occupation in East Timor?

#240 OCTOBER 97

EXPANDED ANNIVERSARY ISSUE! MEDIA: behind the scenes at Soldier of Fortune, Inc. TV series; **KNIVES:** training with Bowies; **VIETNAM:** did Soviets grab U.S. pilots? **PERU:** dramatic rescue at Japanese Ambassador's Residence; **RUSIA:** SOF inside military training base; **WEAPONS:** Watthers into the 21st century.



SOLO OUT! #241 NOVEMBER 97



#242 DECEMBER 97
ELITE UNITS: interview with SEAL founder Roy Boehm; SEAL Team 2 in Tet Offensive; **GERMANY:** elite operators of GSG-9; **WEAPONS:** H&K modifies USSOCOM .45 ACP handgun; **DOMESTIC AFFAIRS:** scientists at Aberdeen use supercomputer to calculate data for Iraq's missiles.

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#243 JANUARY 98

TERRORISM: Mossad plays deadly phone tag with Hamas; Colombian army battles narco-terrorists; **TRAINING:** shooting in the shadows at Thunder Ranch; **RUSIA:** on the street with Moscow's OMON troops; **VIETNAM:** Seal Team Two vs. Viet Cong; **ATF:** goes to Africa



#244 FEBRUARY 98

ELITE UNITS: French Army's 2nd REP parachute regiment; **WEAPONS:** Steyr Scout Rifle; **DOMESTIC AFFAIRS:** FBI searches for Chinese spies at Aberdeen Proving Ground; **AFRICA:** clearing land mines in South Africa; tribal warriors fight for democracy in Sierra Leone

#245 MARCH 98

CHINA: new rebellion against communists; **EASTERN EUROPE:** CIA vs. FBI turf wars; **WEAPONS:** Vektor's CR21 bullpup; merc's multi-tools; **AFRICA:** separatist Gs in Angola; **TERRORISM:** how Iraq almost — and may yet — build the bomb



EXPANDED ISSUE!



#246 APRIL 98

AFRICA: American black ops; **WEAPONS:** happy 50th birthday to the AK; Kimber's neoclassic .45; **MIDDLE EAST:** Hebron's Apache platoon; "Balkanization" of Lebanon; **TACTICS:** sniping in the year 2000

BACK ISSUES

#247 MAY 98

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS: discrimination in BATF; **IRAQ:** Saddam's chem/bio threat; **TRAINING:** grad school for snipers; **BOSNIA:** U.S. vets whip Croats into shape; **WEAPONS:** Chandler Sniper Rifle; SpecOps "Oom" Buggy



#248 JUNE 98

MIDDLE EAST: U.S. troops on Kuwait-Iraq border; **DOMESTIC AFFAIRS:** ATF and IRS bust another law-abiding gun dealer; **SOF at U.S. Army's premier heavy-force training site;** **INVASION?:** German air force in New Mexico; **ENDLESS WARS:** Taliban vs. muj in Afghanistan

#249 JULY 98

ELITE UNITS: Royal Jordanian Special Forces; **DOMESTIC AFFAIRS:** Clinton's end-run gun ban; **WEAPONS:** Mossberg M9200A1 shotgun; Russia's Saiga-12 semiauto 12-gauge shotgun; **COLOMBIA:** coke-bustin' Broncos; **KOSOVO:** Albania's Ruby Ridge;



#250 AUGUST 98

WEAPONS: pistol whipping for the 21st century; H&K's new G36 combat rifle; **MERCENARIES:** where today's action is for hired guns; **SRI LANKA:** Tamil Tigers' heist of the century; **VIETNAM:** siege of An Loc, part II

#251 SEPTEMBER 98

RUSSIA: inside renaissance militias; **PHILIPPINES:** Mindanao meltdown; **TERRORISM:** weapons of mass destruction for tiny tyrants; **DOMESTIC AFFAIRS:** USG eco-lets vs. conservationist in Hawaii; **MEDIA:** blasting CNN/Time's Tailwind story



#252 OCTOBER 98

TERRORISM: Iran's terror exports; **KNIVES:** Gurkha kukri; **AFRICA:** generation of night-vision goggles; **DEFENDER:** debut of expanded product review section; **CHINA:** has next Cold War started?

#253 NOVEMBER 98

VIETNAM: true story of Operation Tailwind; **RUSIA:** SOF goes on bust with tax cops; **ALBANIA:** smuggling small arms into Kosovo — SOF's eyewitness report; **VETERANS AFFAIRS:** one man exposes more than 1,000 phony vets



#254 DECEMBER 98

COLOMBIA: profile of director general of Colombian National Police; **TERRORISM:** targeting Sudan and bin Laden; **MERCENARIES:** freelancers in Angola and the Congo; **MEDIA:** technical blunders in Saving Private Ryan

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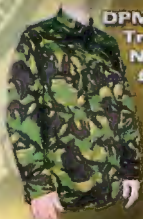
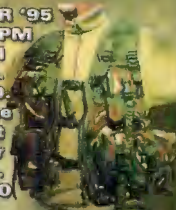


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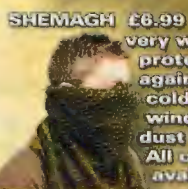
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Colt Cobra CT50 & CT50S Folders

Made for United Cutlery under the Colt(R) name by the good-as-it-gets cutlers in Solingen, the new CT50 and CT50S are one good-to-go duty-knife for cops, firemen and paramedics.

They feature a drop-point Tanto blade, and the CT50S is half-serrated with their patent-pending laser-cut serrations.



We do not favor a Tanto blade-profile for field-work, but for public safety use it is hard to beat for strength at the tip. As we discussed last issue their new serration system has the distinct advantage of being easily sharpenable with the same system you would use for a conventional blade, yet delivers the advantages of a serrated blade for cutting just the sort of things public safety workers come up against every day: heavy fabric, belting material, leather and even sheet metal. A dull serrated blade cuts far better than a dull straight blade — but is a quantum leap ahead when it is sharp. When a serrated blade such as Colt's new laser-cut design is as easy to keep sharp as any blade, it is more likely to be kept sharp, and therein lies the advantage.

The blade is of 440 stainless, bead-blasted, and has a liner-

lock. This thumb-stud-opening blade is enhanced for one-hand opening with a serrated projection on the bottom rear, which when folded is on the top rear, and may be nudged to start the blade out of battery and allows the user to engage the thumb stud at a mechanical advantage. When the blade is open this feature acts as a small hilt, to keep the hand off the blade on thrusts: The rear top of the open blade is also serrated for control.

The grip scales are perfectly wrought from 6061-T6 aluminum, and fit over stainless steel liners, making this an all-metal, non-rusting knife. For a knife that sees duty in public safety, this is an important feature: You can boil it clean and sterile, recoil it and be good-to-go. The CT50-FFS "Fire Fighter" model comes with a black finish and safety-orange anodized grip scales.

With a 3-3/16-inch blade and 4-1/2-inch folded length, the CT50 series come with a very sturdy stainless steel belt clip, one that is tight enough to securely hold the knife to your LBE or about any place that is handy for your work patterns. With a high-tech look and workmanship so perfect it lends it

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Battle Blades

by Bill Bagwell

The Buck Strider

Over half of the knives sold are folding knives. Manufacturers and their market analysis people make it their business to spot emerging trends and develop products to serve customer demand in a market place that is constantly evolving. A case in point is today's tactical folder. Twenty years ago, there was no such thing. Today it is one of the most hotly contested arenas in the sale of cutlery, and I think the knife industry has benefited in general because of the emergence of this genre of knife.

Because there are so many players in the tactical folder field, manufacturers are doing a better job on their production knives than was the case 15 or even 10 years ago. Grinds are better, fit is better, and materials such as carbon fiber and titanium, once thought of as exotic and the province of custom makers are now found on some of the higher end production tactical folders. The guys who carry tactical folders tend to

The ATS34 Strider is easily the most impressive blade made of this material that I have ever tested, and the blades of both knives carry the Paul Bos logo (right) as well as that of Strider and Buck. For the uninformed, Paul Bos has been the overwhelming choice for the custom knifemaking establishment — at least the stock removal segment — for the heat treatment of the high-end, high-dollar custom knives.

think of them as a piece of equipment for use in an emergency and demand quality in their emergency gear. The leading manufacturers have responded to the challenge, and in the process of building a better tactical folder, have upgraded many of their production procedures. This has many cases resulted in better knives from factories across the board.

A tactical folder is not a primary fighting knife. Rather, it is a knife you can fight with, and a piece of equipment that may be called upon to deliver one or more crucial cuts in a high-stress situation. It should be easy to deploy, and have ambidextrous capability. It should be non-glare and non-slip, and equipped with a pocket clip and lanyard hole. Sizewise, it should not be so big that it is hard to carry, but not so small that it loses strength and cutting capability. It should have a blade lock that is fool-proof and fail-proof, and a blade that is easy to sharpen.

When Buck entered the tactical marketplace, they decided to do a collaboration with Strider knives. The Buck Strider is the culmination of the efforts of the design team of Mick Strider and Duane Dwyer, and reflects their thoughts on a folder to address the needs of the tactical folder



arena. Buck Knives brought with them their manufacturing capability and resources and have enhanced the entire project. In fact, in most respects the Buck Strider is on par with, or superior to, the offerings of many of the custom tactical folders on the market that may cost two to five times as much.

When SOF contacted Buck about testing the Strider, the company indicated their willingness to subject the knife to whatever form of testing we thought might be appropriate, and asked which models we would like to test. The Strider is available in both the tanto-style point configuration and the ore conventional drop point. We opted for the drop point, as we felt that this blade shape has more general utility value. Buck responded by sending not one, but two Striders. One is from a limited-production run of 500 knives with the blades from BG42 steel. The other has its blade made from ATS34, which is the standard steel for the Strider. Buck collectors take note.

Buck describes the Strider as an emergency knife. It is not being presented as a fighting knife, nor is it being marketed as such. Rather, it is a knife that you might carry on your person or stow in your fanny pack so that it is readily and quickly available. This brings up the only real criticism that the knife generates. It is big and fairly bulky as folders go. The handle could have been made one-third of an inch shorter and still give adequate coverage to the blade in its closed position. The edges of the handle are quite square and sharp and cause the knife to be less than comfortable in your hand or in your pocket — or on your belt. The handle design does give good retention, and the textured surface of the handle scales provides a positive non-slip surface to the hand, whether bare or gloved. However, in spite of the secure grip, the sharp corners of the handle quickly and painfully announced their presence when we began our cutting tests in very hard seasoned wood. A slight bevel or rounding of the edges of the handle would quickly solve the problem.

The bulk of the handle and the presence of annoying sharp corners thereon are the single points of criticism of the Buck Strider. There are pluses, and a lot of them, to be found when looking deeper inside this knife and Buck's approach to making it. A big plus, up front, is the use of premium, sometimes costly, materials on the Strider, and let

Continued on page 91

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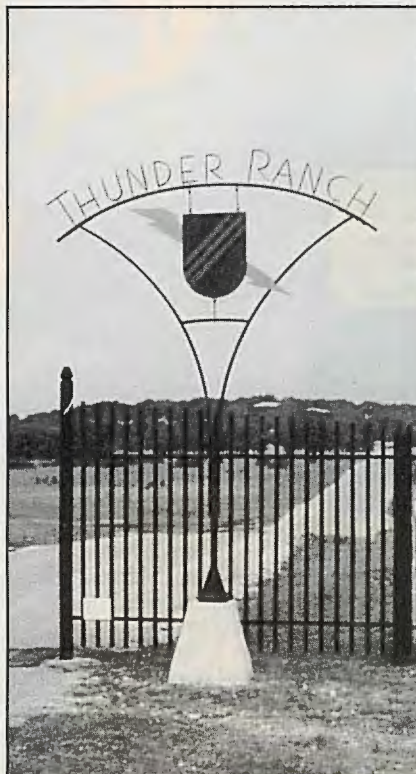
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WORLD SITREP



1

UNITED STATES

Border Blow: Estimates state that 70 percent of cocaine in U.S. is transported across via heavy trucks from Mexico. • **No Sweat:** Secretary of State Colin Powell says he's unconcerned over ChiCom presence in Panama. Admiral Thomas Moorer (Ret.), however, disagrees. • **Latin American News Syndicate:** www.latam-news.com is good informational source. • **Question:** Some are asking why *Ehime Maru*, a very high-tech fishing vessel, was present in U.S. military operations area when hit and sunk by U.S.S. *Greenville*. Sonar signature picked up 71 minutes prior to collision indicated only a small boat. • **More Hassles:** DIA Director Vice Admiral Thomas Wilson says next 10-15 years to be at least as turbulent — if not more so — than the previous 10. • **Needless Inmate Phone Restrictions:** On 2 April 2001, federal inmates will be allowed only 300 minutes per month (down from 1,800 minutes). There is no cost to the BOP for these calls; inmates pay for them. • **Oops!** Sources say that only one of the five radar sites and command centers were destroyed by recent Allied bombing, an 80% failure rate. • **Thanks, Bill:** Clinton Administration OKed transfer of the same fiber-optic air-defense system to China which thwarted Allied air attacks in Iraq.

4

RUSSIA

Iran, I Saw, I Conquered: President Putin advises U.S. that Russia will proceed with conventional arms sales to Iran, and will complete construction of a nuclear power plant. • **Not To Be Left Out:** SA-6 missiles are en route to Baghdad, along with advanced radar equipment. Also, Russian intel officers, dressed in civvies, arrive to train Iraqi counterparts. • **Hey, Me, Too!** Strategic agreements make Vietnam Russia's strongest S.E. Asian ally.

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AFGHANISTAN

Taliban Are Dynamite: Truckload of explosives from Kabul bring down world's two largest standing Buddhas, one 165-feet tall. • **No More Poppies:** Taliban announces on 22 February that it's eradicated opium plantations on its held territory since crop was termed "un-Islamic" by supreme leader *Mulla Mohammad Omar*. Prior to 2000, nearly 3,300 tons were harvested annually.

9

ZIMBABWE

The British Are Here: Brit military team is in-country. Meanwhile, talk is in the air that major "kill-the-Whites" agenda may reach fruition under firebrand Mugabe.

10

ISRAEL

On The Precipice: Israeli hardliners believe that removing Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority is sole way to end violence. Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofax, Israeli Chief of Staff, says that PA is being converted into terrorist front. As of 1 March 2001, 335 Palestinians and 74 Israelis have died since fighting began five months earlier.

13

PANAMA

Read Carefully: (From "Hanssen Case: A Trifle Compared to Clinton-China Connection," by Sam Smith.) "With the transfer of the Panama Canal, four of Panama's ports ended up being controlled by a company partially owned by Hutchinson-Whampoa Ltd., which in turn was owned by Li Ka-Shing, a billionaire so close to the Chinese power structure that he was offered the governorship of Hong Kong. Another owner of the Panamanian ports was China Resources Enterprise, called an 'agent of espionage' by Senator Fred Thompson. CRE was also a partner of the Lippo Group, owned by the Riady family that played a central if mysterious role in the rise of William Clinton. According to congressional testimony by ex-JCS chief Admiral Thomas Moorer, Hutchinson-Whampoa won the right to pilot all ships through the Panama Canal, *including U.S. vessels.*" (Italics mine.)

2

CANADA

New Home: Ottawa-based Russian intelligence operative, Evgeny Toropov, defects. Canadian officials refuse to discuss details of this high-level defection, but timing suggests it might be related to arrest of FBI agent Robert Philip Hanssen.

3

MEXICO

Surprise, Surprise: Chris Whalen, in "Mexico Drug War Has a U.S. Front," reports: "The good news is that Mexico has a new leader committed to fighting corruption," a veteran [DEA] operative tells *Insight*. "The bad news is that Washington has been unwilling to act against the top people who protect the cartels. The leading Mexican families are longtime friends with key U.S. political leaders: summit meetings, fishing and hunting trips, friendships among the wives and kids. They use the same clubs and lawyers."

6

CHINA

Help From Germany: Asks German consortium, Transrapid International, to construct high-speed magnetic-suspension rail link in Shanghai.

7

NORTH KOREA

Catch-Up: Russia playing catch-up to Washington and Beijing in diplomatic dealings with North Korea. Moscow has little to offer, though, save for access to its Trans-Siberian railway. • **Still Trying:** Continues attempts to develop long-range missiles. Its *Taepo Dong-2* still is in planning stages.

8

COLOMBIA

Americans Under Fire: Personnel from DynCorp, a Texas DoD contractor, were recently fired upon by guerrilla forces during rescue op. • **Another 'Nam?** Many fear that U.S. buildup may reach massive proportions. Unconfirmed reports state that retired American SpecOps personnel are operating in-country. Besides DynCorp, Eagle Aviation and Services Technology (EAST), Inc. and Military Professional Resources (MPRI), Inc. are also under USG contract.

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THAILAND

Near Miss: Thai Airways 737-400 explodes on 3 March at Don Muang International Airport just prior to Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra boarding. Drug cartels suspected.

12

MYANMAR

In-Fighting: Since death of Lt. Gen. Tin Oo, Sec. of State Peace and Development Council and army chief of staff, political factionalism threatens to spill over into already strained relations with neighboring Thailand.

9

14

CUBA

Back To Uno? Castro seeks way to return to one-currency system. Real threat to his regime is freely traded U.S. dollar. Also, U.S.-anchored trade embargo helps him prolong his one-man rule.

World Sitrep is compiled by the SOF staff with information from various media and correspondents.



WEAPON TESTS AND EVALUATIONS

The Best of *Soldier Of Fortune*

by Peter G. Kokalis

There are those who write about weapons from behind a desk, relying on field reports, statistics, and press releases to shape their opinions. Then there is Peter G. Kokalis, who for 20 years has traveled the globe—risking enemy fire from the jungles of El Salvador to the deserts of Africa—to bring more exclusives to readers of *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine than any other writer on small arms.

Kokalis debuted as a writer for *SOF* in 1981 and quickly earned a permanent spot in the staff box as Technical Editor. He brought back stories from battlefields around the world; traveled behind the Great Wall to test weapons at the invitation of the Red Chinese government; and even raised a glass with Mikhail Kalashnikov himself in post-communist Russia.

In this comprehensive anthology of Kokalis' best articles from *SOF* and *Fighting Firearms* magazines, you'll get authoritative reviews and detailed information on dozens of handguns, rifles, SMGs, sniper rifles, and shotguns. You'll also travel with him as he trains El Salvador's Atlacatl Battalion, visits the cagey gun dealers of Afghanistan to test the elusive Soviet AGS-17, and goes where no Western writer has gone before for his groundbreaking eight-part series examining the weapons of the Chinese army.

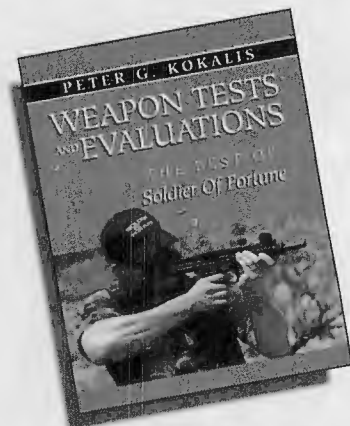


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Raton, Baby!

Yup, it's true: the SOF Three-Gun Match and Convention has been renamed the "SOF/Whittington Center World Championship Three-Gun Tactical Response Benefit Match, Shoot Fest and Gun Show." All profits will be donated to the NRA Whittington Center. Entry fees for the match will be \$200. Shooters will be limited to 200. Shooters will be required to assist as range officers. The match will be held 6-

9 September 2001. Registration begins at 1600 hours, 5 September. The Awards Barbecue will be held Sunday, 9 September.

In addition to shooting in the match, shooters will receive the same



items and access as the Shoot Fest participants. Shoot Fest participants' registration fee is \$100, for which you will receive the following:

- 1: One-year subscription to *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine.
- 2: Shoot Fest T-Shirt.
- 3: Access to the Match.
- 4: Outdoor Awards Barbecue.
- 5: Participation in the "hands-on" manufacturers' demonstrations.
- 6: Access to the gun show.
- 7: Access to seminars sponsored by exhibitors.
- 8: Access to a range where you can fire your personal weapons or weapons provided by SOF.
- 9: The \$15 informal daily range fee is included.
- 10: Sporting clays, trap and skeet shooting will be available for an additional fee.
- 11: Socializing in the evenings at the headquarters hotel, the Holiday Classic, in Raton, New Mexico, which

has a large domed area and pool; live country music will liven up the festivities.

For additional information, see the ad on page 34. Write for an application form to SOF Match, 5735 Arapahoe Ave., Suite A-5, Boulder, CO 80303. See you in September!

No Massacre At No Gun Ri

The Army has released a 323-page report on its investigation into the killing at No Gun Ri during the Korean War. Analyzing some million pages of documents and interviewing 170 veterans, Army investigators concluded that: "Neither the documentary evidence nor the U.S. veterans statements reviewed by the U.S. Review Team support a hypothesis of deliberate killing of Korean civilians."

"Common sense, aerial photography and personal observations would put the number killed someplace between 20 and 30," said commission member Michael O'Callaghan, himself a Korean War vet.

"No Gun Ri was the result of actions by a good-intentioned ally whose soldiers were risking their lives and making a mistake," said a Korean expert at the Institute for Defense Analyses. In reaction to the original allegations, and before the report was completed, the Clinton Administration pledged \$1 million to build a monument to civilian dead, and \$750,000 to fund a memorial scholarship program for Korean students.

Microsleuth?

According to the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, the German foreign office, and the *Bundeswehr* are sending scuttling their Microsoft software, citing security concerns. German officials reportedly suspect that U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) spooks have back-door access to the Microsoft source code, and can therefore readily read Germany most intimate security messages.

Accordingly, the *Bundeswehr* will no longer use Yankee software on computers detailed for sensitive work. The German Foreign Office has since put on hold their plans for videoconferencing with its overseas embassies, for the same reason. German Under Secretary of State Gunter Pleuger was quoted by *Der Spiegel* as expressing his concern when he discovered that for "technical reasons" the satellite service scheduled for use was routed through Denver. A colleague of Pleuger's said this meant the German foreign services "might as well hold our conferences directly in Langley."

Apparently, this information came via a presentation held earlier in Berlin by *Deutsche Telekom*, who, along with Siemens, have since picked up the business that was formerly Microsoft's, and will be providing a secure, German-made system their military can be confident in.



If you find yourself anywhere near Reading, Pennsylvania this June, don't miss the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Commemorative Weekend 8-10 June, at the Reading Regional Airport, 11 Museum Drive. Featured guests will include members of VMF-214, the famous Black Sheep Squadron who raised hell with the enemy over the South Pacific in WWII, who will participate in a panel discussion moderated by Bruce Gamble, author of The Black Sheep. Further information, advance ticket forms and so on are available on their web-site www.maam.org/maamwwii.html ; or by calling 610-372-7333.

only \$29.95 (plus \$4 S&H) from Performance Dimensions Publishing, Box 502, Powers Lake, WI 53159-0502; fax: 262-279-5758; for credit card orders call 262-279-3850. Check-out their web site at www.lawenforcementvideos.com .

Concealed-Carry For Cops

"Concealed-Carry for Law Enforcement" is a fast-paced and informative 34-minute video showing the most effective ways to properly conceal your handgun. Hosted by well-known law-enforcement trainer and use-of-force expert Ed Nowicki, this video contains information that was developed after extensive research and the practical experience of law enforcement officers nationwide. Viewers are shown the strengths and weaknesses of various concealed-carry options, in addition to some nontraditional ways to carry concealed.

The video contains live footage from a patrol car dash camera that shows how the concealed-carry is also an option for uniformed officers. Well-known law enforcement experts in this video include Lieutenant Dave Spaulding, Lt. Harvey Hedden and Massad Ayoob, and their observations are valuable viewing for both the experienced officer and the recruit and must-viewing for any officer who carries concealed either on- or off-duty. "Concealed-Carry for Law Enforcement" is

Anti-Hunting Saab-Sisters

A couple of years ago, Swedish auto-maker Saab was promoting anti antifur campaign with the largest antihunting extremist organization in the U.S., The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and recent issues of *Saab Magazine* indicate that unholy alliance is still strong. A recent issue also featured a story on Carl Frederick Reutersward, the Swedish artist who designed Saab's new symbol, and is best known for his sculpture of a revolver with its barrel tied in a knot, currently displayed in front of UN headquarters. This leads one to wonder if Saab is not also a supporter of antigun extremism. If you would like to contact Saab to express your objection to its working with anti-hunting, especially if you are a hunter who owns a Saab, you can write: Saab Cars USA, Attn: Daniel Chasins, President and COO, 4405-A International Blvd., Norcross, GA 30093. Their phone is 800-955-9007 or 770-279-0100; fax: 770-279-6499; or via e-mail custserv@saabusa.com .

Shooting Blind

Kentucky antgunners are in a lather because a 52-year old blind woman was busted carrying a licensed gun at a U.S. Veterans Medical Center — and Dr. Jeffrey Fowler, a blind

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M-XL \$15 ea XXL \$17 ea



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#T002
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#T003
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#T002 Rhodesian Army Shirt	XXL XXXL	@	\$17.00	
#T003 Try Burning This One! Shirt	L XL	@	\$15.00	
#T003 Try Burning This One! Shirt	XXL XXXL	@	\$17.00	
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#T004 Go Ahead And Jump Shirt	XXL XXXL	@	\$17.00	
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retired cardiologist who is applying for a Kentucky carry license heatedly points out that the blind also have a right to defend themselves. He proved that he could so do, by shooting a perfect score on his test, which requires at least 11 hits out of 20 on a human-sized target at 21 feet.

Kudos, Kimber

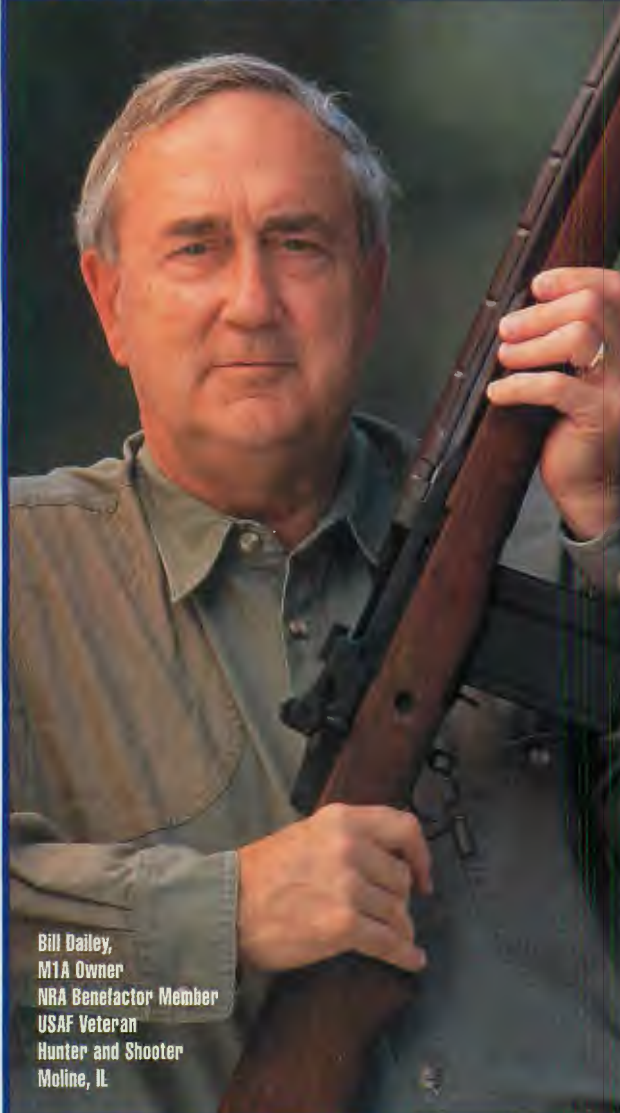
With sales of its Heritage Fund .45 ACP pistol topping the one-thousand mark, Kimber has for the second time in less than six months presented the Hunting and Shooting Sports Heritage Foundation's Heritage Fund a check in the amount of \$100,000. During a ceremony at the SHOT Show, Kimber VP of Marketing and Sales Dwight Van Brunt presented the check to Bob Delfay, NSSF president and CEO. The check represented a \$200 donation for every Kimber Heritage Fund pistol sold since last year's donation. In addition, Leupold & Stevens is packaging a coupon for a specially priced Leupold/Gilmore red-dot scope, with each special edition pistol sold. In addition to this special program, both Kimber and Leupold each pay 1% of their sales to the industry effort.

Ruger Announces Free Lock Exchange Program

Ruger has announced a voluntary program to exchange the older firearms locks shipped starting in 1987, with a new improved lock, at no cost to the consumer. The older cable-type locks, if you held your mouth right and slammed it with a hammer, could be broken open. The new model has no such limitations. Also, it had come to Ruger's attention that some of the padlocks used with Ruger lockable pistol boxes could be opened with keys other than those issued with the lock. No injury has ever been reported because of these lock failures, but Ruger is offering a new replacement for any padlock bearing the name "Ruger" or any red cable lock bearing the word "Ruger" free of charge to anyone returning such a lock to them. All Ruger padlocks and red cable locks should be sent to: Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc., Dept. SOF, 411 Sunapee St., Newport, NH 03773. Further information, if needed, may be obtained by calling them at 1-888-317-6887.

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Sergeant Stone Alive and Well

Although seen on national TV hours after his capture, former POW of the Yugoslavs' Sgt. Chris Stone is having a hard time convincing folks he's alive. Seems that very soon after his capture, someone started processing his death benefits, and now he's listed in many government and private agency records as deceased. The credit bureaus, for instance, have him down as a goner, which makes it hard to get an auto loan, since as Stone wryly observed, "I guess they don't like lending money to a dead guy because they're hard to collect from. I'm frustrated, but I also see the humor in it," Stone said. "Obviously, someone was looking to do the right thing, but they didn't give me much of a chance to get released."

New And Improved G.I. Bill

Benefits slated under the proposed Montgomery G.I. Bill enhancement bill would:

- provide up to \$28,800 of benefits over a 36-month period.
- eliminate the \$1,200 enrollment fee.
- increase monthly payments from \$650 to \$800 for servicemembers who enlist for four years or more, to be adjusted for inflation.
- pay full cost of tuition, fees, books and other supplies for those who enlist for four years or more.
- increase monthly payments from \$650 to \$900 for servicemembers who enlist for your years or less.
- pay for approved specialized courses offered by non-educational institutions.

Currently, there are up to \$23,400 of benefits over a 36-month period, a \$1,200 enrollment fee and monthly caps of \$650 and \$528.

Fire And Air

Canadian readers should be advised that a number of new air or CO2 guns have been reclassified by the Canadian Firearms Registry as "firearms." Included are: Beeman Model 1; Crossman models .357 Mag, Model 1740, Model 1008, Model 1377c, Model 1760, Model 1077, Model 750, Powermaster; Diana Model 20, Marksman Lazerhawk; Webley Hurricane, Webley Tempest.

Korean War Service Medal Still Available

Did you: serve during the period of hostilities (25 June 1950 - 27 July 1953)? Were you on permanent duty assignment or temporary duty for 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days? Perform duty within the territorial boundaries of Korea, waters immediately adjacent to or in aerial flight over Korea?

If so, you probably qualify for the Korean War Service Medal. The agency in charge of this matter for all branches of service is: Air Force Personnel Center, HQ AFPC/DPPRA, 550 C Street West, Suite 12, Randolph AFB, Texas 78150-4714. Applicants must furnish a copy of their discharge papers (DD214) as proof of eligibility. If you need to request a copy of your service records, you can download a request form at <http://www.nara.gov/regional/mpsrfl180.html>.

Additional information on how to apply for or request the

medal can be obtained by calling the USAF Personnel Center, Monday-Friday, 0730-1630 hours (CST) at 800-558-1404, or the Awards and Decorations Section at 210-565-2431/2520/2516; or via fax: 210-565-3118.

UK Handgun Crimes Jump

Since the United Kingdom banned all handguns, crimes with handguns have risen by more than one-third, reports *The London Daily Mail*. Handgun crime is at the highest rate in a decade, according to stats wrest from the Home Office by opposition members in Parliament. The 1997 law was passed in response to a licensed gunowner killing 17 children in Dunblane, Scotland. The ruling Liberal government then revoked the licenses of law-abiding gun owners and required them to sell their guns to the government, who destroyed them. Noted Shooters Rights Association Secretary Richard Law, "all this does is prove that the problem was not the licensed owners — government has completely wasted its money banning and buying licensed guns. The figures show illegal ownership was the problem."

Note Taken!

Recent observers noted President George W. Bush leaving HM-1, and returning the salute from the Marine at the front step. As Bush walked away, the Marine executed a right-face to stand facing W's back — something that was missing in eight years of the Clinton presidency. This traditional Marine Corps token of respect which was rendered to the new Commander in Chief dates back to the early days when a Marine orderly to the ship's captain always faced him, no matter his direction of movement, to be ready to receive an order. And for eight years, old "loathe the military" Clinton never missed it. Heh, heh, heh.

Guatemala Mob Hacks Judge

In response to a very unpopular ruling in a rape case, a mob of more than 1,000 angry locals from Senahu (a highland town in the largely Indian state of Alta Verapaz) attacked a judge after he released two accused rapists, and hacked him to death with machetes.

Judge Hugo Martinez ruled that there was not enough evidence to hold two rape suspects who had been handed over to police by the group of hundreds of angry residents. The judge used a pistol to wound two attackers before he was overcome by the mob, which hacked him to death with machetes, then doused him with gasoline and set his body on fire. Others from the mob stormed a nearby city building, and seized the major and three police officers who were trying to protect the accused men. Their fate remains unclear.

Million Mom Shooter

Barbara Graham — a bereaved mother whose son was shot and killed nearly two years ago, and who memorialized gun victims at the "Million Mom March" rally in Washington, D.C. last Mother's Day — was herself convicted of shooting a man she wrongly believed was her son's killer. ✕

Bye Bye Las Vegas - Hello Raton, New Mexico!



YES, IT'S TRUE.

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- Shoot Fest T-Shirt.
- Access to the match.
- Outdoor Awards Barbeque.
- Participation in the "hands-on" manufacturers' demonstrations. Free ammo.
- Access to the gun show.
- Access to seminars sponsored by exhibitors.
- Access to a range where you can fire your personal weapons or weapons provided by SOF.
- The \$15 informal daily range fee is included.
- Sporting clays, trap and skeet shooting available for an additional fee.
- Socializing in the evenings at the headquarters hotel, the Holiday Classic, in Raton, NM, which has a large domed area and pool. Live country & western music will liven up the festivities.

EXHIBITORS

Commercial vendors. Each 10x10 space will cost \$200. If vendor has a mobile, wheeled exhibit, the Center has space to accommodate it.

Gun Show vendors. Each "table" will cost \$60.

Set up on 5 September, tear down 9 September.

LOGISTICS

Headquarters Hotel is the Holiday Classic in Raton. It has 59 rooms and the courtyard rooms face a domed area 135x80 feet, which includes a pool for socializing, getting hammered, or whatever. Phone: 1-800-255-8879. Cost: King or double, \$45.95 per room plus tax. Only 59 rooms — first come, first served!

The Whittington Center has 125 RV campsites as well as competitor housing, log cabins, housekeeping cabins and backcountry cabins. For rates, check the Whittington Center website at www.nrawc.org or call 505-445-3615.

Travel: If you do not drive, you will have to fly into Albuquerque, NM or Colorado Springs, CO. SOF recommends you use our travel agency, Pathways Travel, for booking your flight schedules. Phone: 1-800-336-7588. Ask for Lavina Vohlken or Gaynelle Tuck, or e-mail: Lavinav@uswest.net. We will have a recommendation for car rental by the time you read this.

For further information and application blanks, write: Match/Shoot Fest/Gun Show, c/o SOF, 5735 Arapahoe Ave., Suite A-5, Boulder, CO, 80303, or go to the SOF website, www.sofmag.com, or call Steve Schreiner at 303-449-3750 ext. 306.

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Looking forward to a great Match, Shoot Fest and Gun Show.

— Robert K. Brown
Editor/Publisher

The FBI's .45



TEXT & PHOTOS BY
PETER G. KOKALIS

In recent times, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has issued, to one group or another within the agency, handguns chambered for the 9mm Parabellum, 10mm Auto and .40 S&W cartridges. In April 1998, they adopted a highly modified M1911 pistol chambered for the .45 ACP round for selected agents throughout the country trained as SWAT team members. Previously, in 1995 their Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) had replaced their Browning High Powers with a Les Baer customized high-capacity Para-Ordinance M1911 .45 pistol.

Why this surprising turnaround from handguns holding as many cartridges as some submachine guns to most recently an M1911-type with a single-stack, eight-round magazine? Simply because by this time only gun writers for the popular press have not grasped the fact that once we've

In April 1998, the FBI adopted a highly modified M1911 pistol made by Springfield Armory for selected agents throughout the country trained as SWAT team members.

Springfield Armory's Professional Model



Right-side view of Springfield Armory's FBI/ Professional Model 1911 pistol.

obtained the required penetration (from a minimum of 12 inches up to 18 inches in soft tissue), the bullet that makes the biggest hole will do the most damage. That means we want a bullet in the largest caliber that can be controlled by the shooter, i.e., the 230-grain .45 ACP bullet, and better yet in a hollow-point configuration that will further enhance this characteristic.

After a great deal testing, far more than the original M1911 was subjected to, and some of it quite controversial and contentious, the pistol submitted by Springfield Armory's Custom Shop (Springfield, Inc., Dept. SOF, 420 West Main Street, Geneseo, IL 61254; phone: 309-944-5631; or toll-free at 800-680-6866; fax: 309-944-3676; website: www.springfield-armory.com) was adopted. The FBI got what it wanted: an IPSC Limited Class M1911-type pistol. A specimen of the commercial version of this pistol, called the Professional Model, and identical in every way to the one issued to the FBI except for the roll markings, was

recently sent to *Soldier Of Fortune* for test and evaluation.

The configuration duplicates that of the famed M1911 Government Model pistol. This locked breech, short recoil design weighs a hefty 40 ounces, empty. Both the slide and frame have been hammer forged from 4140 ordnance steel (the same steel used in the original M1911/A1). Overall length is approximately 8.75 inches. The Nowlin match barrel, a standard 5 inches in length, has six grooves with a left-hand twist of one turn in 16 inches. The width, at the grip panels, is 1.3 inches. These dimensions, together with a height of 5.9 inches, do not exactly add up to a concealment package.

Prior to finishing, the pistol's sharp edges have been rounded or beveled to prevent snagging on clothing or gear, but this is not a radical "meltdown" of the type so popular now. It has been said that seriously dangerous people prefer black. Springfield Armory's FBI/ Professional Model has been finished with "Black T Treatment" by W.E. Birdsong & Associates (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9549, Jackson, MS 39286). Black T is a resin-bonded lubricant coating, and a codispersion of fluoropolymer resin,

Teflon and graphite, in a thermosetting binder. It produces a low-friction coating, free of so-called "stick-slip" (smear) characteristics, combined with excellent resistance to corrosion. Available colors are non-reflective black and NATO (olive) green. This finish coats the firearms and ancillary equipment of numerous, albeit unnamed, federal agencies and certain unspecified military units.

Black T Treatment

All metal (steel and aluminum) parts of the pistol have been Black T-treated. After vapor-degreasing, they are low-pressure blasted with very fine, 150-grit aluminum oxide. Then the parts are both phosphate- and chromate-finished. Black T is then applied by hand and heat-cured. The complete finish is no more than 2 to 3 ten-thousandths (0.0002-0.0003) of an inch in thickness. This compares favorably to salt bluing (black or blue oxide) which is usually about 4 ten-thousandths (0.0004) of an inch thick. The final result has a high salt spray and humidity resistance (greater than 500 hours), a



luminous sights. Tritium (an isotope of hydrogen) provides the energy source for self-luminous sights of this type. Tritium gas and a phosphor particle are pressurized within a tiny glass capsule. Tritium creates soft beta rays that are converted to visible light when they strike the phosphor particle. The capsules are resistant to oil, water, corrosion and temperature changes. While it has been my experi-

Springfield Armory's FBI/Professional Model 1911 pistol



very low coefficient of friction (0.08) and a service temperature-high of 300 degrees Fahrenheit continuous (325 F for intermittent service).

This is an extremely low-maintenance finish — very little, if any, lubrication is required. In most cases, a lightly oiled rag is sufficient to wipe away accumulated debris and carbon fouling. I know, someone told you that about your M16 rifle, 35 years ago in Vietnam, and look what happened. That was then, this is now; protective coatings have come a long way in the past 35 years. Believe me, Walt Birdsong's Black T is a superb finish for combat weapons. It covers my MP5 and a number of my favorite carry handguns.

The left side of the slide is deeply roll-marked "PROFESSIONAL CA.45". On the right side are "SPRINGFIELD ARMORY" and their logo, together with "SPRINGFIELD Custom". The right side of the frame is rolled-marked "SPRINGFIELD ARMORY GENESEO IL USA" followed by the serial number, which carries a "CRG" prefix, and finally "CALIBER .45" once more.

Custom features on the slide include lowering of the ejection port — with the rear end beveled — to enhance ejection reliability and protect empty cases from denting. Even more important, Wayne Novak's LoMount Carry rear sight — without doubt the finest combat-type rear

sight ever attached to a handgun — has been installed with a Trijicon Self-Luminous Dot on each side of its 0.125-inch open square-notch. Rounded and radiused in all the right places, Wayne's LoMount Carry rear sight does not impede the important "tap, rack, bang" drill. It can be drifted in its dovetail on the slide to adjust windage zero.

Original Colt M1911A1 front sight blades were too small and, worse yet, had a disastrous tendency to fly off into the sunset at inappropriate times. A dovetail has been milled into the FBI/Professional Model's slide and a high-profile, blade-type front sight installed. It can also be drifted in its dovetail to adjust windage zero, but more important, it's secure and will never part company from the slide. Of the same thickness as the rear sight's open square-notch, the front sight has a single Tritium Self-Luminous Dot.

A significant number of my personal carry handguns are equipped with self-

ence that white dots or outlines are never noticed under stress, self-luminous tritium sights are useful adjuncts to firing at night or under subdued-light conditions. They are, however, no substitute for a flashlight, as they do not illuminate or aid in the identification of a target as a potential threat.

The many other special features on this pistol are by now *de rigueur* on custom combat .45s. For example, Wilson's extractors are popular with custom pistolsmiths everywhere, as this is a weak link in the M1911 system and most failures to extract are as consequence of loss of extractor tension. Fully machined from solid bar stock, Wilson's extractors are heat treated to provide optimum tension and long service life. The Wilson extractor on the FBI/Professional pistol has been polished and adjusted by hand for a perfect fit. The Nowlin match barrel and bushing are custom-fitted.

Moving to the frame, the magazine-well has been beveled to assist changing magazines. The frame's feed ramp has been opened and polished; also an almost standard feature now on customized M1911s. The beavertail-type steel grip safety has a noticeable hump on the bottom to insure that it is disconnected even if not depressed completely. It entirely cups the hammer to prevent "hammer bite" and permit as high a grip as possible. The frame has been machined high just under the rear portion of the trigger guard. The high grip permitted by these two features lowers the bore line in relation to the shooter's hand and reduces the perceived recoil somewhat.



Springfield Armory's FBI/Professional Model 1911 pistol.

Safety First

Another Wilson feature is the ambidextrous thumb safety. My first experience with ambidextrous thumb safeties, more than 25 years ago, was negative. During that time frame, I carried a cocked-and-locked Colt Combat Commander with a pinned grip safety and ambidextrous thumb safety from a famous pistolsmith of that era. The thumb safety would frequently disengage merely by brushing up against my jacket. I had it removed. Wilson's

ambidextrous thumb safety has a narrow profile and has been properly installed in the FBI/Professional pistol to prevent this. While this is an essential feature for left handed shooters, there are other legitimate applications, such as training with the weak hand.

The FBI/Professional Model is also equipped with a skeletonized Commander-style hammer (called a "Delta" hammer by the Springfield Custom Shop). A match-grade

Little Feather LEATHER

Before you finish talking to Chris Brown (Little Feather Leather Works, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 4353, Jeffersonville, IN 47131; phone: 812-948-9727; website: www.littlefeatherleather.com) you will learn that he is one-half Cherokee Indian and that he established his leather business 26 years ago in 1975. He was also a factory designer, at one time or another, for three of the country's largest holster makers. You will also be talking to the man that will personally make any of the leather goods you order, as this is a classic example of the one-man custom holster shop.



Little Feather Leather Works combat-style pancake holster with double-magazine pouch and belt.

And the craftsmanship is truly impeccable. Brown utilizes only hand-selected grade-A saddle skirting steerhide. The cutting, forming and finishing are all done by hand. Holster edges are hand dressed and the finish applied by hand. The linings are made from silicon-treated garment suede, selected by hand for consistency and color. All of Brown's holsters are formed around actual handguns, not aluminum models. Sewing is done on a Juki Pro 2000

stitching machine.

Chris made one of his open top combat-style pancake holsters (catalog #LFL 4) to accompany our Springfield Armory FBI/Professional Model pistol. Suede-lined, with belt-specific slots, it features a Safety Shield extending up the back of the holster to protect the wearer from safety levers, cylinder latches and other protrusion on the handgun. The hand "boning" on this holster is outstanding. The cost is \$72. To complement this, Chris included a double-magazine

pouch with tension screws (catalog #LFL 2202) that sells for \$44 and a standard 1.5-inch wide (3/16-inch thick) single-layer belt with stitched edges (\$47).

This is great stuff and a fine example of custom leatherwork at its highest level. Be advised that Little Feather Leather Works holsters are precisely hand molded, off-body and without belt tension, and as a result require a break-in period.

— P.G.K.

highly polished Chip McCormick sear was installed. The Wolff recoil spring, guide rod and plug are of the conventional Government Model configuration. The barrel, built to SAAMI specifications, has been "throated" and the frame's feed ramp polished.

The front strap carries hand checkering of 20 lines per inch (LPI). Some might find that to be a bit too aggressive. I personally prefer 30 LPI on the front strap.

The flat mainspring housing has 20 LPI checkering and that provides a no-slip, no-shift grip. This mainspring housing is integral with the installed Smith & Alexander Magazine Guide, an aluminum alloy component. This increases the magazine-well opening by 100% and increases the grip length by a .25-inch. This is strictly an IPSC feature and, in my opinion, ridiculous on a law-

enforcement combat handgun. You wouldn't want to be anywhere in the "hood" when FBI agents were splattering lead all over the walls in between "speed" reloads. But, it's there and it doesn't really bother me.

Kings National Match aluminum trigger has been adjusted to a clean, crisp 4-pound trigger-pull weight. The lightweight, color-anodized aluminum trigger body is swaged to a strong, long-wearing, stainless steel stirrup and drilled with three holes to reduce weight. This trigger has vertical serrations and includes an overtravel screw.

Wilson-Rogers 8-round, single-column, detachable box-type magazines for M1911-type pistols are the standard by which all others must be judged and the magazine that should have been developed for the Government Model .45

eight-and-a-half decades ago. Their single most salient feature is a removable base pad and follower-spring floor plate. Only those who have jammed pieces of wood into a 1911 magazine to compress the follower spring enough to insert a drift into the vent holes so the follower can be tapped out and the spring subsequently removed — hundreds and hundreds of times — can appreciate how important this feature is.

Wilson-Rogers magazines are the choice of top competitors, U.S. military special operations personnel and thousands of armed professionals. The bodies are made of 17-7 aircraft-grade stainless steel, heat treated to RC 38 and precision formed from 0.027-inch gauge metal. The self-lubricating followers are made from a high-strength custom-blended, Fiberfill nylon, as is the base pad. The follower spring is made from heavy-duty high-tensile-strength spring wire to reduce "spring set" and provide the longest possible spring life. I have been personally using these outstanding magazines for many years and can verify their uncompromising reliability and durability. The Springfield Armory FBI/Professional Model comes equipped with five of these splendid magazines.

During the testing phase, the FBI stipulated that the maximum group dispersion for three consecutive 10-shot groups fired from a Ransom Rest was to be 1.5 inches with Remington's Golden Saber 230-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) ammunition. Only one other candidate besides Springfield Armory was able to meet these specifications. The other four entries failed the accuracy portion of the tests. While we used Black Hills 230-grain JHP ammo for our test firing, everyone on the SOF staff involved in this project was impressed with the pistol's accuracy potential.

Checked Coco bolo grip panels are standard on this pistol. It also comes with a lockable storage case, Wilson barrel-bushing wrench, nylon bristle bore brush, and certificate of authenticity from the Springfield Custom Shop. The suggested retail price for the complete package is \$2,395.00, including the five Wilson magazines. ❧

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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY FBI/PROFESSIONAL MODEL 1911 SPECIFICATIONS

- Caliber:** .45 ACP.
- Operation:** Locked-breech short-recoil, semiautomatic, single-action trigger system with frame-mounted thumb and grip safeties.
- Weight:** 39 ounces, empty.
- Length, overall:** approximately 8.75 inches.
- Height:** 5.9 inches.
- Width (at the grips):** 1.3 inches.
- Barrel:** Nowlin match-grade, six-groove, left-hand twist with one turn in 16 inches.
- Barrel length:** 5 inches.
- Magazine:** Single-column, detachable box-type with eight-round capacity; stainless steel body and removable base pad and floor plate.
- Sights:** Rounded and radiused Novak LoMount Carry rear with a green Trijicon Self-Luminous Dot on each side of its 0.125-inch open square-notch; high-profile, blade-type front sight with a single tritium dot.
- Finish:** Black T Treatment by W.E. Birdsong & Associates, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9549, Jackson, MS 39286.
- Price:** Suggested retail — \$2,395, complete with five Wilson magazines, lockable storage case, Wilson barrel-bushing wrench, nylon bristle bore brush, and certificate of authenticity from the Springfield Custom Shop.
- Manufacturer:** Springfield Armory Custom Shop, Springfield, Inc., Dept. SOF, 420 West Main Street, Geneseo, IL 61254; phone: 309-944-5631; or toll-free at 800-680-6866; fax: 309-944-3676; website: www.springfield-armory.com.
- T&E summary:** Pricey, as you are paying for the "FBI" mystique; Exceptional reliability, accuracy potential and durability. All of the extra features desired by armed professionals, except for IPSC-type S&A magazine guide. After 85 years, still the most effective gun-fighting cartridge in the most efficient envelope.



UNARMED DEMONSTRATORS

Put 'em Down With Tanks

by Jim Morris



AFP PHOTO/Louise LEE

Tanks! Tanks? How exactly could a military force use tanks against 20,000 unarmed demonstrators spread out over two provinces of Vietnam? Perhaps they could fire upon them in self-defense.

The trouble started on 9 February when the Vietnamese arrested two Jarai tribesmen, called Nguyen Xuan Tu and Mai Thai Linh in Vietnamese, Rahlan Pon and Rahlan Djan in their own language.

The two are elderly Jarai (Gia Lai in Vietnamese) Montagnards, both in their 60s. They were arrested and beaten by Vietnamese police for organizing, revolt and attempting a peaceful overthrow of the Vietnamese government, at least in the Highlands, as well as for being agents of a foreign power, said foreign power being the Spartanburg, South Carolina-based Montagnard Foundation. The Montagnard Foundation is primarily a Jarai organization, and there are fewer than 300 Jarai in the United States.

The Rahlans confessed, and were subsequently released. That is not the way the Vietnamese usually handle things. Normally the Rahlans would have immediately gone to prison for a very long time, probably longer than either of them had left to live.

This leniency seems to have been an attempt to head-off the demonstrations. If that was the plan it didn't work. Twenty thousand people hit the streets to protest in front of police stations and party headquarters buildings.

In reaction, the Vietnamese closed the Highlands to journalists and sent in the police and army. And they sent in tanks.

"The Vietnamese over-reacted, the way they always do," said Captain D.L.

“Pappy” Hicks, a former U.S. Army special operator who worked with the Montagnards during the Vietnam War, and is an advisor to the Montagnard Foundation.

“We are fighting for human rights and the indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination,” said Kok Ksor, Director of the Montagnard Foundation in an interview with Reuters, “and the rights to our land. Because our land has been confiscated.”

Ksor was formerly a colonel in FULRO, the Montagnard separatist organization active during the Vietnam War.

“There is no more FULRO in the jungle. FULRO doesn’t exist anymore. We have changed the strategy — we don’t want to do like we did before. We only fight peacefully for our rights.

“We can’t bear anymore the way the Vietnamese government has been treating us. The world is helping the Vietnamese government treat us this way and we can’t understand this and have to stand up for ourselves.”

A lot of this is over coffee. Vietnam has become the world’s largest producer of robusta coffee beans. In typical Communist Vietnamese fashion they have shot themselves in the economic foot. They have flooded the market and driven prices down, so that they are barely making a profit. To achieve this end they have confiscated Montagnard tribal lands to the extent that the Montagnards can no longer raise enough rice to feed themselves.

“Montagnards have to hide in the jungle to live as Montagnards,” said Hicks, “and there is no more jungle to hide in. They are starving.”

Loyal Comrades

This story goes back a lot further than most people realize. Everybody who fought in Vietnam knows the Montagnards were loyal comrades, great



Montagnard protesters (opposite and above) carrying the U.S. and South Vietnamese flags demonstrate against human rights violations by the Vietnamese on 12 March 2001, in Lafayette Park across from the White House, in Washington, D.C. The Montagnards are the original inhabitants of the Central Highlands of Vietnam, but after the fall of South Vietnam, the Hanoi government established military control over the area and began carrying out punishments and discrimination against the Montagnards for having fought alongside French and U.S. forces.

fighters and good friends to the Green Beret and MACV advisors who fought with them, lived among them, shared their rice wine and wore their bracelets.

And many know that they had a similar relationship with the French GCM (Groupement Commando Mobile d’Aerportes). But not many know that the Montagnard-American connection goes back to 1929, when the first missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance came to the Highlands to tell the mountain people about Jesus. In a cruel place like Vietnam the story of Jesus sounds pretty good. Not many

Americans know that the missionaries, men and women, stayed and worked for and with the Montagnards through the worst of the war.

On the first day of the Tet Offensive Captain Larry Dring’s Mike Force company of Montagnards was sent into Pleiku to investigate reports of NVA activity. Going into the city, Larry recognized some familiar noises among the omnipresent Tet fireworks. “Forsooth,” said Larry to himself, “that’s gunfire.”

Larry was a born-again Christian in garrison, but very Old Testament in the field. He headed for the mission compound to make sure the Americans were all right. He rounded a corner at the head of his company and found an NVA regiment lined up at a double-arm interval, ready to sweep through the city. Mike Force and NVA looked at each other for a beat, and everybody opened up. Larry watched his company dissolve before his eyes. “My medic was hit, my radio man got hit by a rocket and just disappeared. These were people I’d worked with for five years.”



Montagnard practices with Browning Automatic Weapon (BAR). Depending on the unit, the BAR or M60 was the basic squad weapon for Montagnard troops.

Larry got hit in the head, then the leg, losing 8 inches of femoral artery. He did get some equal time, though, and blew away the "little gerbil" who had hit him. He was dragged into a row house, and found four missionary nurses and a doctor. They saved his life, and he married one of the nurses.

Everybody who worked with them has these stories. I charged an ambush once, and my Montagnard interpreter, Philippe Drouin (Y Kdrowin Mlo), also known as "Cowboy," charged past me to run the ambush off before I could get hit. Not the only time he put it on the line for me, either.

We, the U.S., walked off and left these people. We *more* than left them. In the last days before the Americans' final, shameful flight a meeting was held in the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. Nay Lurette, the Minister of Ethnic Minorities in the Thieu government, a Jarai Montagnard who had worked for me as an intelligence agent 11 years before, offered to set up a guerilla movement to fight on against the advancing Vietnamese Communists.

The Embassy reps waffled. They thanked Lurette for his offer and said they were sure steps would be taken, etc., etc. There are no weasel words in Montagnard languages. If you ask somebody a straight yes-or-no question and get nods, smiles, and positive



SOF files

Everybody who fought in Vietnam knows the Montagnards were loyal comrades, great fighters and good friends to the Green Beret and MACV advisors who fought with them, lived among them, shared their rice wine and wore their bracelets.

sounding words, that is a "yes."

So FULRO (*Fronte Unife de Lutte des Races Opprimees* — Unified Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races) fought on for another 10 years without resupply of any sort.

Y Tlur Eban had fought with the Americans since the first Special Forces camp at Buon Eno in 1962. He had 13

years of war with the Americans and another 10 without. "We won every battle and came out of every one worse off than before," says Y Tlur. Their ammo was gone. Their radios were broken. Their weapons were breaking. They were never contacted by their American "friends" and they were never resupplied.

Nay Lurette, among others, died in a re-education camp. The Montagnards claim that the Vietnamese camp commander said, "If this moi (savage) is so smart we should take a look at his brain." So they sawed off the top of his head. He was still alive and conscious when they started.

FULRO disbanded and sent its fighters back to the villages. But for 4,000 of them this was not an option. They were wanted men. They set out to walk across Khmer Rouge Cambodia to Thailand, where they hoped to contact the Americans. Four years later, 220 of them made it.

They were immediately clamped in a refugee camp to rot. They might be there yet if Barbara Crossland of the *New York Times* had not done a story on their plight.

This story was read by Don Scott, an American civilian who had administered a hospital for an NGO called Project Concern, located in an old SF camp near Dalat. This was a true humanitarian pro-

INTERVIEW with the Invisible Leader

Y Jut Buonto now lives in Seattle. But during the Vietnam War he was one of the most prominent Montagnard leaders. Lieutenant Colonel Barry Peterson of the Australian SAS, who was military attaché in the Highlands, chronicled his adventures in the book *Tiger Man*. But the current Vietnamese government calls him the "Invisible Leader."

SOF: What is your current job?

YJB: I'm an administrator with the Department of Social Health Services for the State of Washington. Also I do a little consulting with the Vietnamese community in the United States.

SOF: What did you do with the Americans in Vietnam?

YJB: After high school I got a job as an interpreter with Special Forces. Later I was sent for special training in Malaysia and the Philippines, for the Combined Studies Division of MACV [A CIA front organization] to organize Truong Son cadre and the Provincial Reconnaissance Units of the Phoenix Project. Then I organized Montagnard teams to rescue downed pilots in Laos and Cambodia. Very little in North Vietnam, because of the language problem. We rescued hundreds of these pilots before they could be captured and become POWs. I led one mission into Happy Valley to rescue Mike Bengé of USAID after he was captured during Tet. But that one

failed and he was a POW for seven years.

SOF: How are you keeping track of developments in the Highlands?

YJB: With my own money I have established contacts in Pleiku, Kontum, Lam Dong, and Buon Ma Thuot (Banmethuot). Not a real office, but, you know, people I keep in touch with. These are Black Ops. It's been hard the last couple of weeks, because the Vietnamese have shut down the phones. But last Saturday [Feb 17] I talked to a Vietnamese businesswoman. She was scared to talk.

SOF: Can you estimate the casualties?

YJB: It's normal in the cities. I don't know the casualties in each village. Before we lost comms I heard that they'd killed four or five in Ban Don and Buon Ya Sup.

SOF: What's happened in your own family since the fall of Saigon?

YJB: Well, my home village is near Cam Ranh Bay. So I took President Nixon there, and my mother showed him our longhouse. Another time I presented Senator Kennedy with a crossbow there. After the fall, the Vietnamese came into the village and made my mother dig her own grave and they buried her alive in it. They let her have a last supper and choose her clothing for it. Then they did that. But later they calmed down and realized my people didn't know anything. After that they pretty much left them alone. —J.M.

ject, which took all comers. NVA troops and G.I.s who had been wounded in the same battle sometimes occupied adjacent beds in this hospital.

Don is an amazing man. He overflows with the milk of human kindness, but bureaucratic obstruction turns him into something like a bandsaw.

Once Don was informed, at the height of the war, that a North Vietnamese battalion was camped about a klick from his hospital. He immediately jumped in an American jeep that had somehow come into his possession. With his Koho Montagnard interpreter, Ha Doi, at the wheel, he roared into the NVA camp and confronted the commander. "Get these people out of here," he screamed. "The Americans will come and bomb my hospital. Get these people out of here!" The NVA commander moved his battalion.

Once, in his own office, in my presence, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Refugee Affairs took a high-handed approach with Don. Don proceeded to give him a civics lesson that all but had him hiding under his own desk.

Ha Doi, whom Don had thought dead, was one of the Montagnards in the refugee camp.

Over the next two years Don put all of his efforts and about a quarter of a million dollars of his own money into getting those 220 Montagnards out of that refugee camp and to the United States.

Don led that effort, but he was not the only one to participate in it. Many people played a part, too many to give the credit they deserve here. Those first 220 Montagnards were resettled in North Carolina, to be near Ft. Bragg and the Green Berets they had served with in Vietnam. Some 3,000 Montagnards perished on the trek across Cambodia. But there were still about 800 in the jungle there. We were told they were fighting for the Khmer Rouge.

There was a lot of talk about trying to get them out, but a) they were completely out of contact, and b) they were thought to be Khmer Rouge. (Many people have forgotten what truly awful people the Khmer Rouge were. But they administered a holocaust that killed a quarter of the people in Cambodia. Percentage-wise that makes Hitler a piker.) And c) when they once did try to cross the border, the Thais chased them back. Not too swift a move for the Thais, since the Yards mined their backtrail and killed eight Thai Rangers. They were *persona non grata* in Thailand.

Then in 1994 a journalist named Nate Thayer, a foreign correspondent in



SOFT files

Of the 10 Montagnards of Spike Team GAME TIME, these seven survived to return to duty following a night of action in which all were wounded. The Montagnards we left behind after the war have been in a most unenviable situation. They have been treated pretty much the way the American Indians were treated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 19th Century.

the Hunter S. Thompson-mold, found them in the wilds of Cambodia. They weren't KR. They were Christian. And the Khmer Rouge had learned to leave them alone. The KR weren't very brave. They were quick to murder the defenseless. But their method of attack was to lay back and throw in mortar and machine-gun fire. The Yards don't play that way. Every time the KR attacked them the Yards charged and kicked their asses from hell to breakfast.

The State Department wasn't up for another two-year battle. Those 800 Montagnard guerilla fighters were here in three months. There were about 200 Montagnards in the U.S. when we brought the first 220 out from the refugee camp. There are roughly 5,000 eligible to join them through the Orderly Departure Program, but the Vietnamese have thrown every possible obstacle in their path. This seems to be out of a simple desire to jerk them around.

The Montagnards we left behind have been in a most unenviable situation. The short of it is that they have been treated pretty much the way the American Indians were treated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 19th Century.

The Vietnamese added a few new wrinkles though. For a time it was illegal for one Montagnard to marry another. This was an attempt to assimilate the tribes in one generation.

No statistics are more telling than the population figures. When the Americans left Vietnam the population of the country, both North and South, was 31 million. It is now 82 million. In 1975 the Montagnard population was estimated at between one and a half and two million. Today it is 750,000.

That is itself a holocaust, and it was done because they were our friends.

The Montagnards are a tribal people. They live in villages of thatched-roofed longhouses set on stilts. In the past they made their living by slash and burn agriculture, moving their villages when the land wore out.

That way of life is gone. Even the jungle is gone, replaced by coffee plantations.

With Friends Like Us ...

The abandonment of the Montagnards by the American government is an old old story. When Geronimo was captured, the U.S. sent the Apache scouts who had hunted him off to a concentration camp in Florida with the rest of the tribe. O.S.S. teams were pulled out before their Chinese Nationalist guerillas could be overrun by the advancing Communists. But if this course of action is open to governments, it is not open to the former soldiers who owe their lives to these gallant allies.

Please don't confuse this article with objective journalism. It is advocacy journalism, and I want you to do something. Write your congressman, and both senators. Tell them we don't want any trade with Vietnam until Montagnard rights are restored. Tell all your friends to do the same, and then do it again.

These people are being jerked around because they are friends of America. Political pressure, especially in this new administration, can set this right.

Major Jim Morris (Ret.) has authored the books War Story, The Devil's Secret Name, Fighting Men, and his newest, Above and Beyond, available from Dennis Cummings, dennis@realwarstories.com. Jim resides in Los Angeles and is also involved in motion picture screenwriting and production. ✕



Water Wings

SOF Jumps With South Africa's PARA Batts

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
ROB KROTT

Wahoo!

I was looking past my feet at a Zodiac inflatable assault boat 700 feet below me as I felt my parachute canopy deploy from the pack tray. After a gentle opening I reached up, grabbed my risers, pulled down hard and checked my canopy. Looking up I saw a full canopy, no blown panels, and no line twists. So far, so good. Having gained canopy control I checked the air around me for other jumpers. Looking up behind me I saw a nice spread of four other canopies as more jumpers exited the C-130 Hercules. The 'chute I was hanging under was a South African National Defense Force Mark IV steerable round. I'd jumped one for the first time the year before at the South African National Defense Force Parachute School at Bloemfontein. Myself and 25 other Americans jumped with a squad of British paratroopers and the commander and sergeant major of the school. That time I'd turned and ran with the wind, held for a while, and then 180ed again to come down just outside the bull's-eye marked on the ground with melons. Melons. The drop zone at the Parachute School at Bloemfontein doubled as a farmer's field. But today the drop zone was the serene, placid surface water of the Hartesbeespoort Dam. I didn't get much of a ride as we'd exited at about 800 feet AGL. I had a quick look around to check out the descent and landing of other jumpers and Zodiacs leaving wake trails across the dam and peered down to see the water coming up to greet me. Before I knew it I was pulling down on my parachute harness capewells to disengage the canopy as — *Kaploosh!* — I hit the water. I'd just made a water jump from a South African C-130, full load from both doors. Hooah!

And so went my first water jump with the 44th Parachute

Brigade of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF). A Zodiac picked me up and two SANDF paratroopers hauled my heavy wet ass (and parachute) into the boat. After picking up three more jumpers from subsequent passes the Zodiac crew deposited me on the shore. There I wrung the water out of my T-shirt and walked towards the beer truck with a serious "jump rush" and a big grin on my face. I got a hearty back slap from my good friend Lieutenant Colonel Steve Camp, SANDF(R) — who was largely responsible for coordinating the jump — and thumbs-ups from the other jumpers in my group. Once assembled into something resembling a military formation we were warmly greeted by Colonel John Brooks, commander of the 44th Parachute Brigade. Colonel Brooks made the presentation of the gorgeous gold metal and blue and white enamel South African parachute wings as a C-130 buzzed us about 200 feet off the deck. After the formal presentations of wings and certificates, plaques, and mementos we put a large dent in a case of Stellenbosch champagne.

It was a family event and we were treated like family. Cold Lion lagers firmly grasped in our hands we joined the party as honored guests. We stood on the shore and as one of our group was interviewed for South African television we watched more 28th Squadron C-130s full of SANDF jumpers, active and reserve, deposit their payloads over the dam. One jumper had the distinction of missing the drop zone entirely, steering in for a landing atop the dam's



SANDF trooper (inset, above) in "nutria brown" uniform and web gear with R-4 5.56mm rifle. (below) Rob Krott peers over the heads of some very happy British Paras about to get their South African wings.



berm. He promptly jumped off into the water to complete his annual "water jump." Another was thrashing about after landing in shallow water when to his dismay a group of his buddies yelled in chorus "Stand up! You idiot!"

It was a real treat to watch a low-level water jump as three South African Air Force C-130s came in over the dam with sticks of jumpers exiting both doors. There were 30 jumpers per door with 15 per stick, so each aircraft dropped 30 paratroopers on each pass. All told there were a little over 800 jumpers deployed throughout the day. After watching the final planeload drop its sticks (including a group who'd already jumped in the morning and managed to make the drive back to the air base to manifest again, the bastards!) we adjourned from the lakeshore to enjoy some airborne camaraderie.

We were guests at a *braais* (traditional Afrikaner barbecue) with the Legion of Associated Airborne, Republic of South Africa (LAARSA). If there's one thing the paratrooper vets from LAARSA know it's how to grill red meat. Much sausage was eaten, many liquid libations consumed, far too many war stories told, and everyone enjoyed some great airborne fellowship. We partied hearty with the LAARSA vets, drinking many a Black Label. Yes! This beer is still brewed, albeit in South Africa ... sure to bring a misty eye to many a 'Nam vet.

The day before the jump when we showed up at the Waterkloof Air Force Base, near Pretoria, for our manifest call and jump refresher, I bumped into an old friend from the previous year's jump at the SANDF airborne school. It was the airborne school's sergeant major, Warrant Officer Kruger, survey-



Captain Mike Kearns, USAF (Ret.), sole survivor of disastrous 4-way formation attempt over the South Pole, cracks a smile at Bloemfontein. And, yes, the truck was there for pickup as briefed.

ing the activity — his large handlebar mustache resplendent. Upon meeting him the year before he'd leaned over to me and said, "I can't believe you're actually bloody here." He was shaking his head in amazement that Lt. Col. Camp and myself (along with many others) had organized this friendship jump between veteran paratroopers from our two countries. There had been a few bureaucratic problems and the specter of some political ones as well, but all had been sorted out. We were able to make a qualifying parachute jump at the school and I personally jumped with the school's commandant, Lt. Col. Le

The 44th Parachute Brigade has its historic roots with the paratroop company formed by the South African Air Force

in August 1943. Unfortunately, the unit was disbanded even before it completed jump training, there being other needs for South African military manpower during World War II. However, some 50 South Africans served in British airborne units, mostly with the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade Group in Italy, France, and Greece. In 1960, a group of 15 South African officers and enlisted men received airborne training at RAF Arlington, England. They then established 1 Parachute Battalion in Tempe, Bloemfontein, South Africa on 1 April 1961, under the command of Commandant W. P. Louw. The first of April is celebrated as the birthday of South African airborne forces.

On 26 August 1966, members of the 1st Parachute Battalion participated in a helicopter assault on a guerrilla base at Ongulumbeshe — the first action of the war in Southwest Africa (SWA) and the first combat action for South Africa since World War II. South Africa's paratroopers would continue to fight in SWA (Namibia) and Angola against insurgents of the Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO) for the next 20-odd years. From their first combat action through 1991 a total of 43 South African paratroopers were killed in action or subsequently died of combat wounds.

The 2nd and 3rd Parachute Battalions were established for Citizen Force (reserve) paratroopers and in April 1976 the 44th parachute Brigade was formed. The brigade included additional airborne units, combat and support, to make the unit an "all arms" organization.

Although the 1st Parachute Battalion carried out several

The Para Batts

platoon- and company-sized parachute operations, the first major parachute assault by South African para-

troopers was on 4 May 1978 when a composite battalion composed of elements of all three battalions and commanded by Col. Jan Breytenbach raided the SWAPO base at Cassinga, Angola. His composite unit jumped directly into combat, engaging a heavily armed guerrilla force of over 2,000 SWAPO insurgents and their foreign advisors. It was an epic battle that included violent small-unit assaults, running firefights, and a rear-guard action fought by anti-tank teams against a Cuban armored column. The 44th Paras also conducted Fire Force operations in Southwest Africa and Rhodesia, as well as border-control operations in the Northern Transvaal. The 1st and 3rd Para Battalions carried out other parachute operations in Angola, while several companies from the brigade made helicopter assaults during the conflicts in SWA.

The South African paratroopers ended their involvement in SWA with an air-land operation in the Kaokoveld by 1st and 4th Parachute Battalion Group to counter the last SWAPO incursion in April 1989. A company from the 4th Parachute Battalion was the last South African Army combat unit to withdraw from Owambo. South Africa's paras were first in and last out.

Since then the paras have deployed internally throughout South Africa to stabilize unrest and in Ciskei (formerly a homeland state) in a countercoup operation. All paratroopers, in both full-time and part-time units (active and reserve), are volunteers. They are trained by the 44th Parachute Brigade at the Parachute Training School, Bloemfontein, Republic of South Africa.

Roux and his sergeant-major, Warrant Officer Kruger.

During my visit to the Parachute Training School at Bloemfontein I was impressed with the size and professionalism of the operation. The SANDF facility was more modern than the Fort Benning facility I remember from the 1985 to 1990 time frame. Even such stalwart paratroopers as Sergeant Major Frank Shaw (11th Special Forces) and Col. Dick Stoops (101st Airborne) who were on the tour with me were impressed. The Parachute Training School is all inside a huge hangar. Warrant Officer Kruger told me it is the largest indoor parachute training facility in the world. I believe him. Inside are sand pits, built up on the concrete floor, for PLFs (parachute landing falls) from platforms and swing-landing-trainers. Suspended harnesses, mock doors, bleachers, briefing areas, they're all inside. And to top it off there are eight, yep, eight doors and cables on their 34-foot tower which is built into the back of the building.

The Race Card A No Card

Our water jump training/jump refresher was held in a large hangar at Waterkloof Air Force base. It was a massive affair going on for two days as hundreds of paratroopers were sent through training prior to gaining a spot on the manifest. We went through a good thorough ground refresher and every one became well-acquainted with our instructors who would also be our dispatchers (jumpmasters). Professionals one and all. The 44th Parachute Brigade is fully integrated and the paratroopers seem to consider all the political nonsense over race issues to be exactly that — political nonsense. Officers and NCOs, black, white, or any other “shade” were accorded the respect due their rank and experience. It felt very much like the 82d Airborne Division.

In addition to the hundreds of South African paratrooper there were a few British soldiers and a group of German veterans including an officer serving in Namibia. We all endured “suspended agony” in the harness as we practiced drills and we Americans were screamed at by jumpmasters in a grounded C-130 during aircraft procedures and door exit training. It seems they shuffle with the opposite foot forward as the American airborne. They're also somewhat “British” about



Parachute School instructors supervise refresher training. Colonel Ken Seymour (right) in suspended harness training.



their pronounced stomp and drag to the door, unlike the faster (and sloppier) U.S. Army “airborne shuffle.” Oh, well, we grinned and bore it as we knew we would get to jump out of a C-130 Hercules at low-altitude over water and earn our South African Parachutist Badge. One bit of drama during the refresher training was the two 20-something “blackhats” (airborne instructors) arguing over who would tell a 70-something reservist and WWII Operation Market Garden (Arnhem) veteran he was too old to jump. “You tell him he can’t jump!” “Hell, no, you tell him he can’t jump!”

He jumped.

The day after the water jump we toured the Johannesburg military museum. Displays dated from the earliest European settlement of South Africa with interesting exhibits from the Zulu Wars, the Boer War, both World Wars, and various mod-

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(left) Rob Krott and Lieutenant Colonel Steve Camp. (above) Group photo at Brigade Headquarters, Bloemfontein.

BORDER PATROL'S

Desert

Rats

BY JIM BARTLETT
&
ANGELICA ALLINI



A. Allini

SRT Turns Up
The Heat On
Cross-Border
Invasion

I could do it so that no one passed the class, that's no problem. We could weed everybody out by day two, but that's not the point." Commander Brian Brown was giving *SOF* the skinny on what it takes to be part of the USBP's Special Response Team for the Tucson, Ariz., sector. SRT is a low-profile but very high-speed branch of the Border Patrol. Along with their national affiliate, BORTAC, the unit responsible for the Elian raid, they comprise the service responsible for the more dangerous missions the USBP comes across. From serving high-risk warrants on smuggling rings to taking down dopers in the remote desert, SRT gets called when it absolutely, positively has to be taken down overnight.

Membership is no easy thing to come by. The more we listened, the more it sounded like Ranger school or BUD/S condensed into 12 absolutely miserable days. "We usually finish with plus or minus a third of what we started out with. Out of our last class of 23, seven made it. We lost some to injuries, some to attitude. Anyone who wants to, can come back and try again." Because Sector SRT units are not standardized, the local commander is left to his own initiative to develop a course he feels fits the bill for the special nature of their operations. An E-5 with 1/505th at Fort Benning before joining BP, Agent Brown has come up with a course that is already being emulated by other sectors such as El Paso, Texas.

Brown gave *SOF* an exclusive look at the particulars of the training schedule and current operations. "Prior to the basic class, candidates must score a 90% on the Federal Law Enforcement PEB test (scaled for age and sex). Then they have to shoot a 90% on the BP qual. with pistol. After that, they do an interview with us and if they clear, they're selected."

Like Parris Island and other institutions worth their salt, recruits arrive late the night before. After the usual admin work and drawing of weapons and equipment, the ordeal begins. "They go through hell into the wee hours of the morning. Then they'll get a few hours of sleep and *Bam!* we hit them with our PT test," Brown told us. "The first real day of the basic class they have to pass our own test. If they don't, they go home. Our basic PT test is incredibly difficult by any stretch of the imagination. It's the next level up." SRT's own test is *not* scaled for age and sex.



Those who clear it are hurtled down a grinding, 10- to 12-day ordeal marked by ruck marches, live-fire exercises, mountain-endurance tests, savage blisters and a host of other field problems. "If they're asleep by 0300 they're lucky. Some nights we give them a half an hour and then it's right back at it," Brown continued. "We have lots of bloody blisters, but we tie everything into actual OPS training, we're not just out ruckin'."

Wildcat Wildcards

Far beyond simple border enforcement, SRT is a wildcard element and cause of major headaches to those with ill intent.



(opposite) "Parate! Migra!" Leveled M4s and a no-nonsense approach ensure the safety of both agent and line-jumpers. Sure Fire lights add quick-point illumination during takedowns. (above, right) Evidence of a dope load that got away. Burlap remnants were stashed brazenly close to the line. Budweiser 24-pack was left as a tip for thirsty packers. (above, left) One down, thousands more to go. While the dope smugglers pulled the plug on OPS when SRT arrived, aliens continued to make a go of it nightly.

Agents who emerge on the other side of the basic class are a fusion of law enforcement and light infantry unique in the Federal community. Capable of everything from urban warrant services to desert insertion and ambush, they are a great asset in the struggle to stem the cross-border invasion in the Southwest. But don't expect paramilitary swagger from the desert elite. All, in fact, spend most of their time as regular line agents until the call goes out. Devoid of a nickname, mascot or BDUs, SRT does its job quietly and deliberately, dressed in simple OD. Brown is quick to point out that while he and his men do special things in a special way, they're line agents first and last.

"After graduation, we hold an FTX somewhere south of here," Brown continued, bringing us into SRT's current operational status. "We'll spend a week trying to get as many dopers as we can." On arrival, they went all out. "The first night we popped 800 lbs. from a drive-through. Two nights later we pop 2,200 lbs. out of a horse trailer." Despite lower apprehension numbers, touted as success in urbanized areas down on the line, it's a long border. Infiltrators shift like the sand, find the holes and go around more hardened positions. When the higher-ups allow it, SRT comes in to make



J. Bartlett

their presence felt.

The formula is simple and straightforward: Identify the areas in need of special attention and move in. With the Sector Intelligence Units (SIUs) having largely been turned into number-crunchers for Washington, technology has stepped in to fill some of the gaps. "Setting up an LP/OP is the older-style mission. I don't care for that much anymore unless we've managed to get burning intel and we know it's a hot trail," Brown outlined. "I don't have the manpower to lay up on a trail for two weeks and pop one load. What I will do, however, is let a sensor sit

(above) Aftermath of an alien smuggler's irresponsible bid to make it north. Auto smash ups are a regular occurrence as Coyotes place profit over lives and cost local taxpayers tens of thousands every time they do it.

(below) Sticky situations require extreme prejudice along Southwest smuggling routes. SRT members keep up to speed on Desert CQB.

J. Bartlett





A. Allm

"Tally Ho!" Like modern-day cavalry, SRT outriders (above) round-up dopers with alarming regularity. (right) Remington 870 Short barrel acts as numero uno persuader and SRT pack howitzer. If the mission requires it, M79s are also available for illumination and chemical delivery.



A. Allm

on that trail and tell me when something's coming. That's perfect."

Given enough time, SRT members can outline a quick takedown plan and set up an array of devices for whatever they may encounter. As smugglers use several different methods to move their loads, it's a question of different strokes for different folks.

Supply And Demand

Vehicle traffic is very common. Numerous rutted trails and cuts in the cow fence make driving through a fairly easy thing. To halt the north-bound travel of these loads, SRT prefers "Spike Strips." Made from heavy rubber sections that expand like an accordion, they are seeded with a phalanx of 3.5-inch spikes. When a vehicle reaches the point of no return, an agent yanks it across the road and *pow*, good-bye white-walls. A stop unit then settles the matter with leveled M4s.

Smugglers also employ good old-fashioned pack trains using horses. The trains have been known to charge over agents on foot when discovered and are always protected by armed guards. With the AK-47 being preferred over more traditional, lever-action fare, shock effect during the initiation of contact is a big plus. For that, they deploy the Sting Ball. Shaped like an old Gammon bomb, "Stingers" combine the best effects of the flash-bang with something akin to a Claymore packed with rubber balls. We were told they have a dra-



A. Allitt

Honda 250s and M4 carbines are the tools of the trade for hard-riding SRT operators on a lengthy desert border. Encumbered and strung out on their lines of march, bikes catch dopers flat-footed on the dusty trail.

matic effect on equine behavior. In the thick cactus stands of the desert, they are a *Vaquero's* worst nightmare.

Foot-packers are another common method to bring drugs across the border. Infiltrated across the in various size groups, these ordinary Mexicans feed their families by becoming human mules. Their packs are usually nothing more than old seatbelts padded with rags and duct taped to the bundles of dope. "They're humping 30- to 60-lb. loads plus their food and water, which is usually out of a muddy tank. They're going over mountains and through the

desert for sometimes six days at a stretch. Two to get past the Mexican Military and three or four coming north. They're some hardcore boys."

As is always the case with dopers in the Southwest, one never knows what one will find when taking on such groups. Sometimes armed, sometimes not. Always strung out on weed, heroin or speed to keep going. Initiation of contact with an Omni Blast 100 flash bang is the preferred method of takedown, followed by a quick rush with leveled weapons. On the flatter expanses of desert, whole groups of 20 to 30 on blacked-out bicycles have also been encountered.

Sometimes, however, subtler methods yield big hauls. On a recent excursion into the Coronado National Forest, Brown and one other agent took in close to 300 lbs. "We got a call that one of the sensors I have up there was popping, so we rushed down there to where we thought they'd come out," he explained. "We pulled up in this little canyon I know of and started cutting all kinds of sign up towards the ridge." Clad in plain clothes and jackets, Brown and the agent found a group of 15 taking a breather a 100 yards or so from the trail head.

After scanning the area for guards and the load, they struck up a conversation with them. The packers began to get nervous as Brown questioned them about the big burlap bundles they had stashed nearby but he continued to chat as if he was nothing more than a hiker. After

CUTTING SIGN THE SRT WAY

The deserts of the Southwest are anything but trackless. Determining who is who by the marks they leave behind becomes critical to mission success. As proficient as they are at CQB, weapons drill and takedowns, the real key to putting the heat on border-crossers is SRT's ability to cut sign with the prowess of Apache scouts. As with everything else in the shadowy world of smuggling, subtle signs make for big clues.

"You can tell what kind of traffic you're dealing with if you know how to cut the sign," Dave W. informed us during an impromptu tracking seminar given for SOF. "There's tons of sign out here and knowing what you're looking at means the difference between going in prepared for something and getting caught off-guard."

• The first step to cutting any kind of sign is determining how old it is. The dryness of the desert means that sign degrades quickly, usually in a matter of hours. When tracks are fresh the edges of the tread pattern are very clear and the soil is still very loose. Any touch disturbs it. Also, blowing on

the print will kick up a fine dust that hasn't had time to settle in under the heavier granules of soil.

• Determining the number of people in a group is fairly simple. Find a trail and draw two lines, about a meter apart. Count the number of prints between the two and you'll have a good estimate of how large a group passed that way.

Determining the type of traffic being cut is very important. Running up on armed dopers when you thought you were dealing with aliens can be hazardous. Both types have unique characteristics that can tip you off.

• Aliens are for the most part simple peasants. Groups of them include women and men of short stature, thus leaving small shoe sizes. They are by and large very poor and will usually be wearing cheap sneakers with worn soles that leave shallow tread marks. Agents can also determine the geographical origin of different aliens by their sign. Lots of sandal tracks indicates people from southern Mexico and Central America, where it stays hot year-round.



Dressed for success, this SRT member relies on the Blackhawk tactical vest, 870 short-barrel, and Beretta 92d in .40 S&W for desert takedown. Note Stinger non-lethal flash-bang for interdicting horse loads.

some more friendly banter, they finally admitted that, yes, the big bundles were not a change of clothes, but many many pounds of marijuana. (Overland coke loads have become passé since NAFTA opened up the roads) Brown and his colleague then gently broke the news that they were indeed the dreaded Border Patrol.

"An older man with the group told everybody to be cool so they didn't scatter. He knew the drill. Afterwards, a few of them helped us get the stuff down the hill and we turned them loose. Find your own way home," he concluded. "I wasn't going to hang around and tie up a bunch of people getting them a ride back south." He went on to explain that Federal prosecutors, tied up with numerous cases,

couldn't touch anything unless it's a slam-dunk conviction. "Because we didn't actually catch them with the loads on their backs, the U.S. Attorney's Office would have kicked it right back at me. The shocking thing was that they were coming across the mountain in the middle of the day. That's a recreation area up there, lots of hiking trails."

Deadly Desert

Things don't always go so smoothly, however, and we were told more than one hair-raising story of encounters with dopers in the middle of nowhere. One recent brush with death had two agents cutting sign off a sensor hit in the Naco Sector. "You're very vulnerable cutting sign at night because you're using a light," he explained. They followed a

trail for about a half an hour when they heard two guys take off through the brush up ahead of them. The agents pursued them for a short ways, but it was a losing proposition so they returned to where the pair had holed up. When they got there they found a brand-spanking-new Colt SMG, some shotgun rounds and a hypodermic full of god knows what. "It's a dangerous game. That little neuron in their head says pull the trigger and you've got two dead agents. We don't see it much anymore, but we figure that they were scouts for a coke load."

After our briefing, it was time to hit the field with the team. An operation had been laid in the day before on short notice and the office bustled with activity as everyone gathered gear and prepared for an extended stay in the field. Weapons were drawn, vehicles loaded and a last minute map recon conducted.

"It's pretty basic. There's an area out there with a little Indian village and a road that goes straight down to the border. Vehicles come across all the time as well as horse and foot loads. Sector wants us to deter it,"

Continued on page 84

- Dope-packers tend to be larger men as they have to hump heavy loads over long distances. Consequently, their prints will be much deeper and their shoe sizes larger. Because they are earning a fair living, they usually equip themselves with a good pair of boots. Big feet, field treads and deep prints are the dead giveaway. Another obvious indication of a dope load are little strands of burlap from the bundles that get snagged on bushes.

- Pack trains using horses are common. Because the animals are treated poorly, doper sign stands out from regular trail riders. Horse smugglers don't feed their animals for days to keep them more manageable. A long horse trail with no manure is a good indication that it's not the Pony Club you're following. They also don't get regular visits from the blacksmith either. Bare hoofs mean unshod feet or thrown shoes. Obvious drag or scuff marks indicate exhaustion and lameness, a common condition among these long-suffering animals.

Because smugglers know how good the Border Patrol gets when it comes to tracking them, various countermeasures are taken to throw them off the sign.

- The most difficult types of smugglers to track are known as "carpet-walkers." With pieces of ordinary carpet strapped, glued or nailed to the bottom of their boots they leave almost

no perceivable track, unless they walk across deep, soft sand. Sometimes, an eagle eye agent can spot a soft swish in the sand, but by and large they leave no trace.

- Crossing roads is always a gamble. In many areas, BP drags the roadsides every day so that any new tracks show up fresh and clear. To counter this, some smugglers carry a long length of carpet or canvas. They roll it out over the road and ditty bop their group across. Problems arise when the road is too wide or an agent spots the faint marks left by the edges.

- Two other common methods of masking their sign are walking backwards so it looks like south bound traffic and/or scuffing out the tracks with a branch. Both are easy to foil. With the former, simply cut far enough north or south until you find where they turned around. The branch trick is less than useless as scuff marks stand out in the most obvious way. It can also mean an inexperienced guide or a group winging it on their own.

Many times, thermal scopes and sensors can only put agents in the general vicinity of traffic. In remote areas, they may not be available at all. In the never ending game of cat and mouse, sharp eyes and a hunter's instinct can still be worth more than all the gizmos money can buy.

— J.B. and A.A.

Meet Tomorrow's ARMY

Big Changes Ahead For U.S. Warfighters



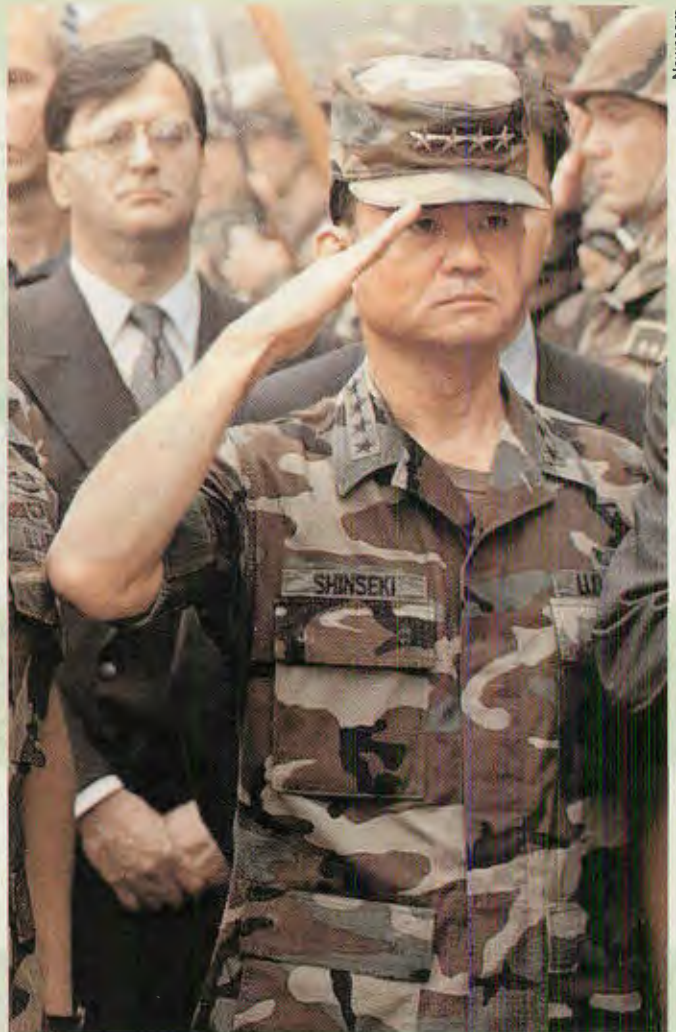
Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, unveiled his plan for the future of the U.S. Army in October 2000 with Army Secretary Louis Caldera. Their vision sent shock waves through the military and defense industry. The future of weapons-system upgrades, new weapons programs, even the career tracks for servicemen were immediately put into question.

The key elements of the plan call for:

1. Eliminating all distinctions between current heavy and light forces — turning the Army into a medium-weight force.
2. A timeline was set forth dictating the Army's ability to deploy brigade combat teams anywhere in the world



Photos: Military Stock Photography



Newscom

Army Chief of Staff Shinseki (above) plans to revamp the Army with an air-mobile-capable wheeled "tank" (left) replacing the current M1 series.

- in 96 hours, a division in 120 hours and five divisions in 30 days.
3. Deployed forces would be able to use advanced information technology to receive real-time intelligence.
4. Manpower will be shifted from bloated support units to combat arms.

According to the two Army leaders, we are in the midst of a military revolution the likes of which is unprecedented. Or is it? The great militaries of history are notorious for planning to fight future wars the same way they won or lost the previous one. Battlegrounds have been a fertile breeding ground for fantastic technologies, technologies quite capable of such carnage that an opponent would hopefully have no choice but to throw up his hands and surrender. However, in most instances, what was lacking was the foresight of commanders and intestinal fortitude of politicians to ensure their effective use — Harry Truman excepted. This is critical, for we are often talking about saving not just soldiers' and civilians' lives, but also the survival of civilizations.

The Civil War began with lock-step formations squaring-off with muzzle-loading single-shot weapons; and ended with static trench warfare, gruesome sieges, and the modern cartridge case. World War I picked up where our Civil War ended: presidents and generals scratching their heads with bloody hands, trying to break through a static line dividing France.

Again, technology threw the tacticians a curve ball.

Over-the-top charges were stopped in their tracks by the deployment of the machine gun. Commanders struggled with the tactics equation of how to integrate the weapon successfully and break through the lines. Churchill's tank (and the introduction of the American Expeditionary Force) came to the rescue.

World War II saw a similar development in the race between technology and tactics. The Germans used the tank and a new concept of mech infantry (technology) to implement their *Blitzkrieg* (tactics) with Teutonic efficiency.

Are we on the verge of making the same mistake that thousands of years of recorded history warn us about? Are we applying today's technology to solve the problems on yesterday's battlefield? Success often occurs when that same technology is applied in new ways, just as the Germans discovered with the *Blitzkrieg*. And just as the French thought the Maginot Line would keep the Germans from even considering an attack, are we fooling ourselves and drawing the wrong conclusions from the Gulf War — that long-distance warfare, thanks to smart bomb technology, will prevent us from having to use and bloody precious ground forces? That has always been a goal.

Shinseki's Revolution

The first step in this program involves converting two brigades at Fort Lewis, Wash., into interim brigades equipped with a medium-weight force structure and new intelligence and recon capabilities. Trials are already underway for an off-the-shelf wheeled vehicle that will replace the tank and the shock-power backbone of these units. The program calls for an entirely new family of vehicles down the road. Shinseki calls for the Army-wide revision to be combat-ready by 2010. Pretty ambitious for an institution not known for embracing change. But history has warned us of the dangers in resisting such transformations and the reliance of using today's new technology to fight yesterday's battles.



courtesy Dale B. Cooper

As well as our military machine functioned in front of the world during the Gulf War, it is even better now. Many improvements have been made based on the real-world use of the munitions in Iraq.

Had these goals been implemented earlier, think how they could have changed the execution of the Gulf War. The timelines available to U.S. forces would have allowed a combat-effective force in-place in essentially one-sixth of the time it took 10 years ago. Look at our recent deployments in the Balkans, where everyone scratched their heads in wonder at the pace of American deployment.

These constraints have confounded American war planners for decades. During the Cold War, this was very evident. Whereas the Warsaw Pact countries could simply drive out of their motor pools in attack formations, NATO was essentially left with a thin green line to hold them off until the bulk of our war-fighting machine arrived. And even then it was obvious that moving that much equipment over in time to stop any attack was fruitless. The answer was to preposition the beans and bullets in Europe, and hopefully get the Armies there, draw their equipment, and get out to the field in time.

This became a well-oiled dog-and-pony show that most remember as REFORGER exercises. Here the U.S. and our Allies showed the Soviets just how good we were at getting there. I don't know that we fooled anybody, for in the '80s NATO decided it was best if an intermediate-range nuclear force were deployed on German soil — just in case.

What can be drawn from this is that the prepositioning of forces works; and the prepositioning of equipment does not. You simply cannot guarantee that the men can meet up with their gear in time, and that reduces your options militarily and politically quite drastically. This is especially so in today's world, where we have fewer soldiers doing more. It is more likely that any deploying troops come not from the United States, but hot off some deployment elsewhere.

The decision to field a force that can deploy "as is" is a good one. It increases the flexibility of planners and politicians alike. It focuses the training missions of those units exactly where it



courtesy Dale B. Cooper

During the Gulf War and the near-destruction of Iraqi mech and armor units, not one M1 tank was taken out of commission by enemy fire.

should be: getting there and fighting. And units that are capable of that, are units that serve as a deterrent.

Army Lite

By eliminating the distinction between heavy and light units, the Army has more capable units at any one time, and is not forced to decide whether to put a square peg into a round hole. This is especially important when deployment times are reduced.

When analyzing the current expected world threats, and the performance of American equipment in the Gulf War, several things become apparent. Perhaps the most significant development in the last 20 years is the demise of the Soviet Union, and the reduced threat of a global conflict. Remember that the American force structure was designed to deter and defeat such a conflict first. Its secondary mission was to conduct and win any brush-fire conflicts that came along; the two-front concept.

We did this flawlessly. In fact, our deterrence was so effective, there are those who will argue (for decades) that the Soviet decision to counter our deterrence simply bankrupted them to the point of capitulation. Maybe, maybe not. But what cannot be denied is that the Soviet Army was defeated without resorting to World War III.

But now that that mission has been accomplished, what is next? If we were able to design a force structure that was able to defeat the Soviets so effectively, can we do the same today? It is not quite that easy. Our opponent was easy to identify in the past; that is not the case today. The Russians are still a threat, to be sure, but not to the extent that they were. And behind them on a list of potential bad guys, nearly everyone seems equal: Iraq, Iran, Libya, China, et al. What is an Army to do?

The stakes in the game have changed too. Ideologically, we were facing off with the Soviets in a game for our very survival. Is that still the case? Probably not, and it must be factored into any force structure realignment, that without those odds, the political will to stay the course in any conflict will simply not be there. This was important in Vietnam, and a lesson we apparently took to heart in the Gulf War. Once we decide to go, we need to win fast.

Let's look at our equipment. As well as our military machine functioned in front of the world during the Gulf War, it is even better now. Many improvements have been made based on the real-world use of the munitions in Iraq. Our smart bombs are smarter. In the near-destruction of Iraqi mech and armor units, not one M1 tank was taken out of commission by enemy fire. This was perhaps the greatest military proving ground ever utilized.

The challenge is now: Will we be able to learn from this, and prepare for future conflicts? Shinseki's plan is hopeful. And it is necessary in light of two facts of life: The military is underfunded and under-manned. This is



courtesy Dale B. Cooper

Had these goals been implemented earlier, think how they could have changed the execution of the Gulf War. The timelines available to U.S. forces would have allowed a combat-effective force in-place in essentially one-sixth of the time it took 10 years ago.

where Shinseki may get high marks. He deals with reality. Rather than sit back and hope that a new administration will come along with a willing Congress and better fund the military, he does not rely on it.

By going to more generic-type units and not relying on mission-specific organizations, by reducing the logistical tail, there is more manpower available for the combat arms. The plan addresses the fact that there may not be an improvement in recruiting. It plans for the likelihood that there may be more base closures.

It appears that this plan acknowledges the fact that although the Soviet Union is gone, there are still real threats to our security. We may be called upon to engage in complicated, unpopular conflicts with fewer personnel and resources available. It all seems pretty common sense.

So what's the problem? There are many. This plan seems to rationally and realistically address present and future threats in innovative ways using our current state of technology. But none of

this can be done in a vacuum. Our military is not run by an emperor, it's commanded ultimately by civilians — civilians who must be re-elected.

The likelihood that this plan will look the same in 2010 as it does today is slim. And given the input of political meddling, interservice rivalries, and the inherent resistance the U.S. Army has to change, there may be little hope of this plan surviving Shinseki. And no matter how good our crystal ball is today, things can change rapidly tomorrow. The Soviets could come back, or China could get its act together and fill their shoes. Who knows?

Furthermore, the turmoil this will create within the Army itself is daunting. Entire career paths will be gone. What do you do with all those 19K tankers? Do they really want to settle for driving essentially a Bradley Fighting Vehicle on wheels?

Technology is at a point where there is also a socioeconomic issue as well. When armies were lining up against each other with pikes and clubs, you could "recruit" nearly anyone able to walk into an effective army. That is no longer the case. For instance, with real-time battlefield intel and data uplinks, today's cav or tank

platoon leader has more in common with a fighter pilot than the stereotypical knuckle-dragging jarhead. There is a huge investment in finding this individual and training him, and a corresponding reluctance to putting him in harm's way. Plus, he must be challenged more for retention's sake. And what is the cost to society in not having him run a business or doing something else?

And what about the other services? Shinseki must be given credit for taking the lead on this transformation, but can it occur in a vacuum? If the question is "How do you airlift the most effective armored weapons system ever fielded?" Is the answer really, "Get a lighter tank?" Or should it be, "Get a bigger airplane"?

Since World War II the Army has made effective strides in the concept of the combat team. Battles have been won because leaders realized the combined effect of infantry, armor, field artillery and close-air-support at the unit level. And for the uninitiated, it is

Continued on page 86

EXPOSED! CLINTON'S OKC COVER-UP

How The Feds Strangled The First Amendment

by Roger Charles

On Friday, 17 January, the ABC news magazine 20/20 aired the first major television network story that questioned the U.S. Government's version of events in the April 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The episode, "The Families Want to Know," identified very specific flaws in the conventional-wisdom and previously accepted accounts of the largest incident of domestic terrorism in our nation's history. The most disturbing question was whether law enforcement agencies of the federal government, specifically the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), had prior warning of threats to blow up federal buildings in Oklahoma City.

In this story, SOF examines how journalistic ethics clashed with the Clinton Administration's efforts to control and manipulate news coverage of the terrorist bombing.

At the time the 20/20 story aired, the author was a consultant with the production team on this special-assignment project. He is a retired Marine lieutenant colonel, Vietnam vet and a frequent contributor to SOF.

Editor's note: SOF congratulates Roger Charles for having the integrity to resign his position at ABC News in the wake of his 20/20 segment being shelved.

When a major media outlet like 20/20 raised serious questions about the federal government's official version of the Oklahoma City bombing, the Clinton Administration exerted intensive pressure to stop the expose or, at a minimum, to control damaging revelations.

The White House, the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the ATF were alerted to this impending public-relations disaster. They

saw the 20/20 show as highlighting credible evidence that some elements of federal and local law enforcement must have been expecting a significant threat to federal buildings in downtown Oklahoma City.

In doing so, 20/20 would threaten the Clinton Administration's artfully constructed claim that the federal government had received absolutely no prior warning of any threats to federal buildings in Oklahoma City. The ABC News presentation would buttress these explosive charges with substantive evidence that government agencies (federal, state, county and city) had told factually inaccurate stories about other key aspects of the terrorist attack.

The net result of these charges would raise serious doubts about Janet Reno's claim that the bombing crime had been solved — that two loner/loser anti-government nuts, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, were the only perpetrators, and these two had, by their lonesome, killed 168 of their fellow citizens.

Only three days before air-date, the DOJ press rep assigned to the Oklahoma City Bombing Task Force prosecution team in Denver, Leesa Brown, changed her tune from the near-automatic response that "the judge has issued a gag order — we cannot comment on that point," to suddenly wanting to set up an off-the-record telephone conference call with a key prosecutor who had previously been off-limits.

This standard damage-control technique was very enticing to the 20/20 production team, since the Reno-ordered stonewall had been so effectively used to prevent prior requests for contact with any prosecutor.

Participating on the Tuesday conference call were Don Thrasher and myself, and representing the prosecution task force, Leesa Brown and Joseph Hartzler (the senior prosecutor for the upcoming McVeigh trial). The seniority of this prosecutor and his personal involvement clearly signaled

that the Clinton Justice Department recognized the “PR” consequences of the 20/20 report.

Hartzler’s denial was absolute: There was “no evidence of any prior warning ... of any terrorist threat to Oklahoma City.” Hartzler went on to question how anyone could even entertain the idea that he and other dedicated public servants involved in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation would be party to such a cover-up.

To 20/20’s credit, the piece that aired three days later did not back off. Hugh Downs set the tone for the piece in his introduction when he asked, “Was Oklahoma City an avoidable tragedy?” The program brought to the mass-media market for the first time, credible evidence on these points:

1. On the Friday (14 April) before the Wednesday bombing, the Oklahoma City Fire Department had received a threat warning. (Subsequent statements that denied the warning had been easily proven false.)

2. Abnormal local bomb squad activity was absolutely confirmed only four blocks from the Murrah Federal Building, less than 90 minutes prior to the bomb’s detonation, although this activity had initially been flatly denied by various officials at all levels of government.

3. More abnormal bomb squad activity was credibly reported (but not confirmed) only one block from the Murrah building less than one hour before the bomb ripped through the northern face of the federal edifice.

4. The DOJ story of two federal law enforcement officials trapped inside a “falling elevator” by the bomb’s blast was a demonstrable lie.

5. An extremely credible witness described the presence of out-of-town federal law enforcement officers at the bomb site immediately after the explosion. (The witness’s boss had also observed this presence and had initially confirmed this crucial observation in a “shadow” interview for a local television news team. After his first substantiation, this confirming witness had suddenly and inexplicably declined further comment.)

Deny, Deny, Deny

Tom Jarriel summed up the Clinton Administration’s reactions and protests in these terms: “The Justice Department, under a gag order from the courts, declines to discuss a number of questions and refused on-camera comment to 20/20. But, on background, they emphatically denied there was any forewarning the Murrah building or any other building was going to be bombed on April 19th. They say there were no warnings of any type about possible trouble or terrorist activity in Oklahoma City. They say all questions will be answered once the trials begin.”

This DOJ attempt at media manipulation and intimidation had utterly failed, but not for lack of effort by Reno and her minions. (Following the program’s airing, knowledgeable sources at ABC told me that Janet Reno had personally called a very high-level executive at ABC News to request that the program not be shown, or failing that, that her office be provided an advance video tape copy of the program. I was unable to determine if this advance copy was provided.)

But, if the Clinton spinmeisters were thwarted in their efforts on this 20/20 episode, their tenacity was rewarded three weeks later when Peter Jennings and his ABC *Nightly News* team folded like a two-dollar suitcase on an even more important story involving the Oklahoma City bombing.

This next case was marked by near desperation, if not panic, as the entire federal case on Oklahoma City threatened to collapse due to parallel investigations by both ABC News



Former ATF-paid snitch, subsequently indicted by feds after she went public with her story, Carol Howe poses here in Nazi flag with Tec-9 pistol at Elohim City, a center of neo-Nazi activity. (below) Howe and boyfriend strike pose — something tangential politicians are good at — in neo-Nazi regalia.



and NBC News. The focus of both efforts centered on a petite blonde woman, Carol Howe.

As SOF readers learned in a two-part series ("Prior Warning," November and December '97), this former debutante from Tulsa threatened to expose the federal government's stunning incompetence in failing to prevent the Oklahoma City bombing. Carol Howe operated as a paid confidential informant (CI) for the ATF from August 1994 through February, 1995. (She had been reinstated *after* the bombing on an emergency basis, and served for several more months.)

Howe functioned at the center of a federal law enforcement investigation into the "White Aryan Resistance (W.A.R.)." She focused more specifically on Tulsa leader, Dennis Mahon, and his connections to a white supremacist compound, Elohim City, in nearby eastern Oklahoma. The ATF designated this investigative project as "TERRORIST/EXTREMIST."

Carol Howe first hit the Tulsa news in December 1996 when the FBI raided the Tulsa house she shared with her neo-Nazi boyfriend, James Vieffhaus. Both were arrested and charged with possessing a nonregistered destructive device, making a telephone bomb threat, and conspiring to make both the pipe bomb and the telephone bomb threat.

The circumstances surrounding this raid require careful examination.

Timothy McVeigh's trial was due to start within a very few months and although it had not received much media attention, the government's case was known to be incredibly weak. That the government's case was riddled with holes became abundantly clear when one looked at the details of the huge investigative effort dedicated to "solving" the most lethal crime of America's first two centuries.

While Vieffhaus was held in pretrial confinement, Carol Howe was freed on bond paid for by her wealthy father, the recently retired CEO of a major Tulsa petroleum firm. (Howe also hired for his daughter's defense an extremely able Tulsa attorney, Clark Brewster.)

Journalism 101

The first journalist to contact Carol Howe was John D. ("J.D.") Cash, a former Tulsa mortgage broker who had graduated from the University of Tulsa law school but had never practiced as an attorney. Cash had broken an amazing string of stories in the *McCurtain County Gazette* on the government's flawed and transparently false claims about the bombing.

The great majority of national media outlets had waited to be spun by their favorite "highly placed sources close to the bombing investigation and prosecution task force." But, J.D. had done his journalism the old-fashioned way — he had visited Elohim City, met with high-level members of the American neo-Nazi movement, and spend hundreds of hours on the telephone interviewing key sources with first-hand knowledge of various pieces of the OKCB story.

In a 28 January 1997, article, Cash revealed that an unnamed ATF CI had provided information in the fall of 1994 to her handler, Special Agent Angela Finley, that neo-Nazis centered on the Elohim City compound had discussed bombing federal buildings in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Cash hinted at major revelations to come that would rock the Oklahoma City bombing case to its very foundations.

I had been in contact with Cash since October 1996 and had received copies of both Cash's articles and those by the Tulsa newspaper (which did not connect Howe to the OKCB case until after Cash exposed that connection).

Following the 17 January airing of the 20/20 piece, the ABC production team had returned to the field, visiting first Denver and then Oklahoma City.

In Denver we met with Stephen Jones, the sophisticated and canny defense attorney who headed Tim McVeigh's defense team. Although Jones' law practice was based in Enid, Oklahoma, and he enjoyed teasing the media that he was "just a county seat" lawyer, early in his career Stephen Jones had worked in prestigious positions in both Washington, D.C., and New York City. He had played in the fast lanes and won more than his share of competitions. To put it mildly, Jones was nobody's fool.

Thrasher and I laid out the Carol Howe arrest as the Tulsa newspaper had reported it to date, adding revelations that John Cash was to break in four days. Jones exploded with the apt spontaneous characterization — "This is fucking radioactive!"

On 29 January, the ABC producer and I sat with Cash in Oklahoma City, discussing the Carol Howe development. Cash agreed to contact Howe by telephone to see if she would consent to talk with the 20/20 team. Howe's home telephone answered with her recorder, and Cash left a message requesting a return call. After some gentle prodding, Cash agreed to call Howe's cell phone and she answered.

The 20/20 producer took the phone from Cash and what had begun as a short introductory call stretched into a 45-minute interview with me taking notes on Thrasher's side of the call.

Howe spoke about her role as a paid undercover informant for the ATF in its investigation of Dennis Mahon, Elohim City and the White Aryan Resistance (W.A.R.), beginning eight months before the bombing of the Murrah Building. She related detailed information on the former German army officer, Andreas "Andy" Strassmeir, who had been head of security and military training at Elohim City. And, she dropped a minibombshell when she revealed that immediately after the bombing she and her ATF handler had spent three days in an Oklahoma City motel being debriefed by FBI agents assigned to the bombing investigation.

Hot Story

Thrasher immediately realized the significance of what Carol Howe had just related, and called his Executive Producer, Victor Newfeld, at the 20/20 headquarters in



Andreas Carl Strassmeir — "Andy the German" — was a German national on an expired visa, whose father was a high official in Germany's Kohl administration. Openly promoting violent attacks against the U.S. government, conducting training sessions at Elohim City, and identified by BATF CI Carol Howe, Strassmeir nonetheless was never arrested nor detained, and quietly slipped out of the country. Here, Strassmeir wards off reporters in Germany.

Premier Broadcasting and Publishing Company

New York City.

We received the go-ahead to pursue the Carol Howe story full-time with the eye towards doing another 20/20 piece as soon as we could complete the field investigation, interviews and editing. We were looking at a minimum of two weeks to get a 12-minute piece on the air.

Once Newfeld had briefed his bosses, the word came back Thursday, 30 January, that the highest levels of ABC News well-understood the significance of the Carol Howe information. We should prepare a piece that would air the very next day, Friday, 31 January, on ABC Nightly News with Peter Jennings.

As we began to put the pieces together for the story we became aware that NBC news reporter/producer Mike Boettcher (now a national affairs reporter with CNN) was also working the Carol Howe-Dennis Mahon-Andy Strassmeir-Elohim City story.

We learned Boettcher was also developing his piece for a news magazine, NBC's *Dateline*.

Our 20/20 production team immediately began to work with Jennings' Producer for Investigative Projects, Chris Isham.

ABC news quickly realized that Carol Howe's allegations were going to be of such seriousness that more research and substantiation were going to be required. This additional work would preclude our preparing the piece in time for Jennings' Friday show.

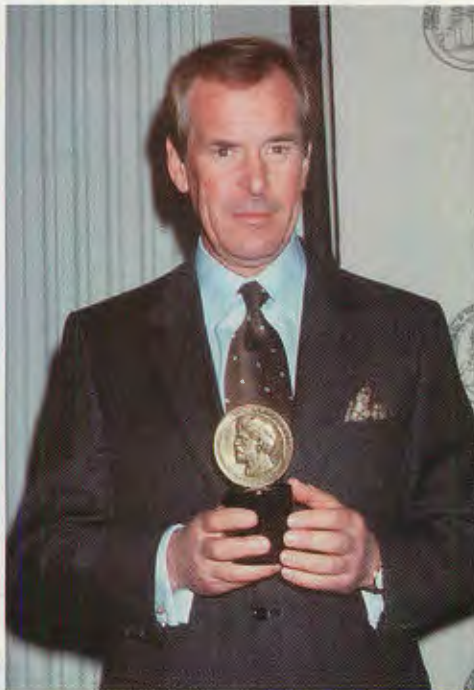
About this time, NBC learned of our ABC production team's success and the NBC news executives made a similar decision — don't wait a couple of weeks to get this story on the news magazine. Get it on the soonest possible nightly news show with Tom Brokaw.

ABC news and NBC news were now engaged in a race to get this huge story on the air first, and to get it right.

The week of 3-7 February found our ABC production team based in Oklahoma City, but spending most of our time in Tulsa. We discovered that a member of the Alabama militia and true patriot, Mike Van derBoegh, had a copy of a Brazilian television documentary on American neo-Nazis which included some sensational footage of Carol Howe and other white supremacists conducting tactics and weapons training at a farm in Missouri. ABC news made arrangements to copy the tape and obtain the requisite legal release from the Brazilian filmmaker.

(As it turned out, NBC had located some German television video on American neo-Nazis that featured Carol Howe and Dennis Mahon. It was more than mildly ironic that two years after the Oklahoma City bombing, both ABC and NBC had to rely on foreign TV documentaries for video on two people who had played key roles in the wider conspiracy connected to the OKBOMB case.)

By Tuesday, 4 February, we had largely completed our research, done interviews and shot the background video of the two federal buildings in Tulsa that Carol Howe had identified as having also been mentioned as possible targets for the neo-Nazi bombers. It was time to call the federal govern-



Online USA/Robin Platzer

Peter Jennings, host of ABC Nightly News, here receiving a Peabody award for excellence in journalism, was only TV network anchor with mettle to introduce segment dealing with the possibility the Feds had prior warning of the OKC tragedy.

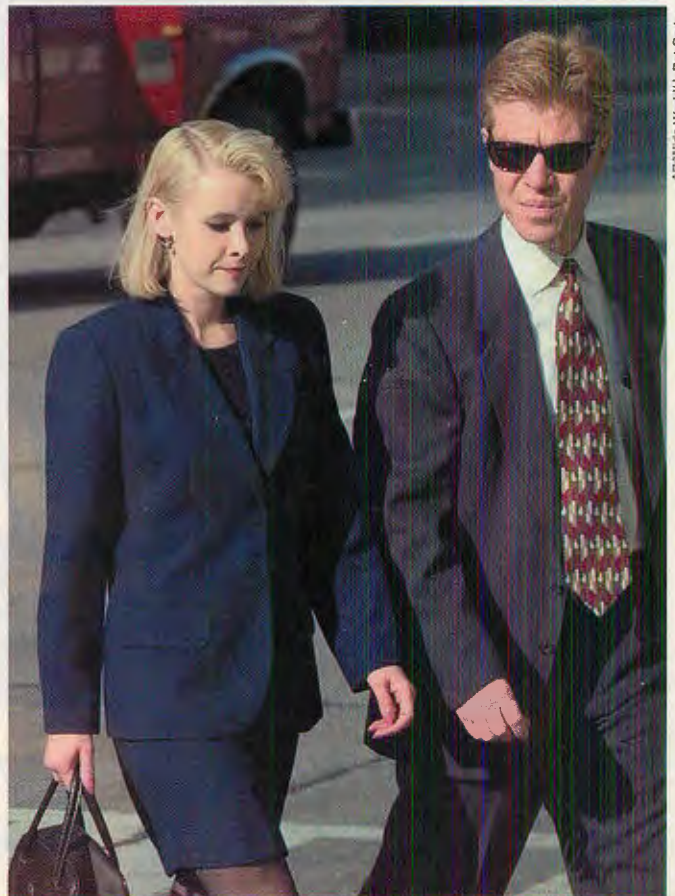
ment for official comment on what ABC Nightly News was going to broadcast the next day.

For The Record

Thrasher paged the DOJ press rep with the OKBOMB Prosecution Task Force in Denver, Leesa Brown. She returned the page and Thrasher asked her the following 10 questions, on the record:

1. Was Carol Howe a confidential informant?
2. Was her control agent Angela Finley?
3. Was she providing information as a CI from late summer/early fall of 1994 through February/March 1995?
4. Did she provide information specifically on Dennis Mahon, Andy Strassmeir and Elohim City?
5. Immediately after the bombing was she used in the Tulsa office to try to contact Dennis Mahon and was she then taken by Angela Finley and Jim Blanchard [FBI Special Agent] to Oklahoma City for debriefing?

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AP/Wide World/J. Pat Carter

Looking more subdued, and more like a debutante and less like a revolutionary wannabe, Carol Howe and attorney Clark Brewster go into federal court in July 1997 to answer charges she made bomb threats and illegally conspired and possessed explosive materials. She was subsequently acquitted on all counts.

THE most disturbing report to come out of the Sierra Leonian slaughter is an accusation that some United Nations elements in the country have worked with Foday Sankoh's rebel Revolutionary United Front. UN forces in West Africa are supposed to be opposed to the rebels, not supping with them.

Before leaving Freetown late last year, the United Nations Force Commander, Indian Army Major General Vijay Kumar Jetley named Nigerians — including his deputy Nigerian General Mohammed Garba — as having colluded with the enemy. It was an unprecedented leak: Details appeared in the press before it was officially released.

Jetley accused several senior Nigerian civil and military deputies serving under him “of nepotism, corruption, collusion with the enemy and being more interested in getting their hands on Sierra Leone’s diamonds than tackling the problem at source.”

If that wasn't enough, he went on: “The mission directive given to me and which I tried to follow implicitly, directly conflicted with the interests of not only the warring factions, but also the major players in the diamond racket like Liberia and Nigeria.” It was a bombshell and had implications well beyond Sierra Leone's borders.

For a start, Jetley was replaced by a Kenyan general and there was no more heard of the recalcitrant Garba.

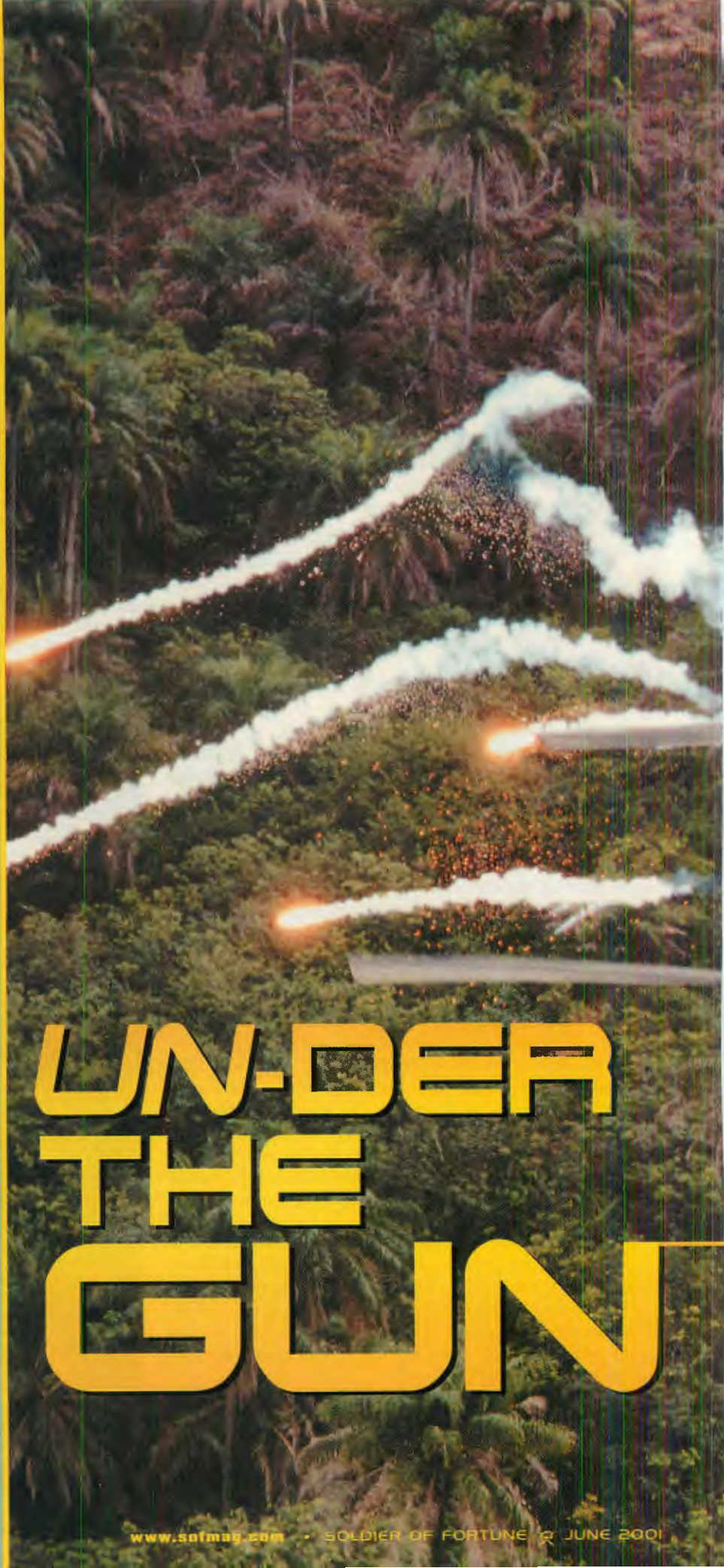
As a Western diplomat in the capital exclaimed when hearing it all for the first time, “Sounds a bit like war talk to me.”

Immediately afterwards, the Indian government gave notice that it was pulling its army out of Africa. Like the Americans after the Somali massacres, you can be pretty sure that nobody is going to see Indian soldiers on that continent for a very long time.

But then, as somebody asked after the scandal broke, “What exactly was it that the UN has achieved in any of its roles recent years?”

Part of the answer came from a choleric, rumped, hard-drinking British hack whose paper is famously to the left-of-center, and, therefore, pro-United Nations. Curiously, he declared that what was happening in Sierra Leone was not that different from numerous other operations in which the world body was involved elsewhere. Just about all of them were a mess, he declared.

He'd seen a lot of them, he said, and by reputation, I knew that he had. He reck-



UN-DER THE GUN

oned that the deadlock that had enveloped Sierra Leone's war was no different to what was happening elsewhere, in places like South Lebanon, West Timor, Angola, the Congo, Sinai and Eritrea.

Inefficient Arbitrer

And, he asked, what did they have to show for all this expenditure of your and my money?

"Nothing!" he declared, looking at each one of us in turn.

It's worth remembering, he recalled, that the UN was originally created to resolve international disputes. Interestingly, since the UN sent out its first keepers of the peace in 1948, more than 100 countries had provided almost a million personnel for 53 operations around the globe.

Notably, he remonstrated, it was United Nations soldiers that stood helplessly by while 7,000 Muslims were massacred in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica five years before.

He had been there, too.

The trouble with the war in Sierra Leone is not so much the rebels — who experience has shown, can be contained by a relatively small force — but the United Nations. Indirectly or otherwise, the UN has helped to perpetuate the war in West Africa.

As we go to press, there are more than 10,000 UN troops in Sierra Leone. In roughly a year's activity, they have not only cavorted with the rebels, supplied them with weapons, ammunition, medicines and a lot else besides, but at one stage, last June, a Nigerian general tried to organize his own private treaty with them. That man was Jetley's deputy, Major General Mohammed Garba.

This maverick officer — he has been variously categorized as corrupt and viciously anti-West — had some outrageous things to say about what the rebels were doing just then in Sierra Leone.

"Foday Sankoh's people are not responsible for the aggression," he commented at one of the many parties that he attended. He also feigned indifference about atrocities that the RUF rebels were, as he put it, "purported" to have committed. This could be one of the reasons why he was relieved of his command by UN Headquarters in New York shortly afterwards.

Sadly, such are the machinations of

Whose Side Are These Guys On?

Text & Photos by Al J. Venter

Royal Air Force CH-47 Chinook workhorse lets rip with anti-missile flares during rescue of UN personnel at Kailahun, eastern Sierra Leone, where more than 200 hostages were rescued from rebels.

United Nations' efforts to bring peace elsewhere in Africa. There seem to be agendas hidden everywhere.

Working For Own Ends

What happened in Sierra Leone with Garba, followed the interception — a few days before 19 June last year — of one of his telephone calls by the Freetown government.

According to a document that *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine acquired in London recently, the Nigerian general had apparently been speaking “off the record” to some of the regional rebel commanders at RUF headquarters at Makeni, one of the main rebel staging posts in the north of the country.

Obviously unaware that his calls were being monitored, it became clear that the rebels had been given Garba's satellite phone number and were speaking to him at will. Then Freetown discovered that a clandestine meeting had been scheduled between the rebels and Garba for the following week.

The Nigerian general had suggested to them that New York wanted him to “explore the possibility” of Foday Sankoh's insurgents possibly returning to the Lome Peace Accord. What he didn't tell the RUF was that Freetown had absolutely nothing to do with it. In fact, the government didn't even know he was talking to them, never mind still, arranging meetings.

There were no specifics about time and place, but it was suggested that they get together and that representatives of several African countries attend. With all the participants together, they could discuss any RUF approaches to the peace idea.

Early reports indicated that the authorities in Freetown — the Sierra Leone Army, as well as the British High Commission — knew of the betrayal. They were well aware that the Nigerian contingent, Garba especially, had



Sidegunner on RAF CH-47 mans 7.62 "Gatling" as Chinook sweeps along Sierra Leone coastline. (right) Lifting out captured supplies from a rebel stronghold in Sierra Leone, the RAF Chinook played a seminal role in the successful Kailahun rescue effort.





been trying to facilitate meetings with the rebels. Also, with the second-in-command of the UN Headquarters in such a senior position, there was evidence that there were some Nigerians — especially among senior staff — that were actually pro-rebel.

This was apparently the legacy of another Nigerian military man, the last ECOMOG force commander, General Pbamber.

What followed then might have done justice to one of the thrillers on today's *New York Times* best-seller list.

Feeding Them The Rope

On Saturday, 17 June, Sierra Leone army intelligence determined a tentative date for Garba's little tryst. It was to be held on the following Monday, two days hence. Everything pointed to it taking place at Lunsar, then also in enemy hands and which Neall Ellis ("Nellis"), the country's lone gunship pilot, had been regularly pasting over the past few weeks. (See *SOF*, Sept. 2000)

Lunsar was close enough for all the participants to get to without many hassles. Also, the place was isolated and whatever happened there wouldn't draw any attention. The probable time given for the meeting was about 10 in the morning. It seemed that Garba had brokered an arrangement convenient to all parties. Obviously, Sierra Leone President Kabbah's government would never have sanctioned anything private between a UN officer and the rebels who were trying to topple him.

Army HQ, meanwhile, thought that if it were to happen at all, the UN delegation would most likely get there by helicopter. They'd land at a disused airfield near the RUF headquarters adjacent to Lunsar's old iron ore mine. The rebel command would come from Makeni by road.

It would be Nellis' job to get airborne about 15 or 20 minutes before. Hopefully, he'd catch the rebels on the ground with them believing it was his rotors bringing Garba and his entourage to meet them.



(far left) Neall Ellis, contract pilot for Sierra Leone military, and his "tame" Shi'ite sidigunner Hassan go over a set of maps prior to a mission to hit rebel stronghold at Makeni. (left) Rebel prisoner is marched off Ellis' Mi-24 Hind, for a "bit of persuasive interrogation." The Sierra Leone troops who brought him in appear pleased with themselves. (above) Wounded government troops are brought into Cockerill Barracks by Nellis' Mi-24.

"Obviously, I was counting on them all to be gathered together in one area. I'd surprise them out there in the open. But basically, I'd have to get in and out before Garba and his bunch arrived."

Nellis armed the Hind's Gatling and two pods of 57mm rockets "courtesy of the United Nations."

These were the same munitions that were returned to Cockerill Barracks at General Jetley's behest only days before. By a curious twist of fate, Garba was the one who had signed for their release to the air wing.

Rather than use the other Mi-24 with its larger 80mm rocket pods — it makes for a bigger killing radius — Nellis reck-

oned that the smaller projectiles would be better suited to him coming in low and fast. That way he'd be able to launch at the last moment, ensuring sharper accuracy.

"That's not possible with the 80mms. With them, I have to stand off a bit," he explained. "If we didn't, coming in so close to the deck there was a possibility that we'd take hits from our own shrapnel."

Before Nellis lifted off, his army bosses checked first with the Indian force commander whether he had any knowledge of a meeting taking that day involving the UN, the government, the rebels or anybody else. "Negative," Jetley replied.

What emerged later, was an affirmation that Garba had never liaised with his boss about any deals — secret or otherwise — with the rebel command. Obviously, the only player who knew nothing about the rendezvous was the Indian force commander. Once that became clear, it confirmed everybody's perception that a deep-rooted animosity existed between the two officers.

As second phase, Nellis was instructed by his military bosses that if nothing happened at Lunsar, he was to follow the Makeni road and see if there was anything coming from there. Cockerill Barracks was aware that if Garba decided to cancel at the last minute, he wouldn't — at that late stage — be able to get a message through to RUF command in time to stop the convoy.

Nellis: "We were a little late for lift-off, but that wasn't a problem. Time means nothing in Africa. Pitching up for an appointment an hour late is normal."

"The visibility was perfect, one of those bright sunny days when a target can be seen for miles away, which, unfortunately, tends to work both ways. They would be able to spot us from a distance, as well."

"Once we got over Lunsar we saw nothing: no vehicles in the area, no groups of people, either in town or in the surrounding area."

It didn't make sense.



(above) The aftermath of a rocket attack on one of the small towns in the north of the territory currently held by the rebel RUF. (inset) Former British SAS veteran Fred Marafono in the gunner's seat of the Hind. Fred, now almost 60, has been active militarily in Sierra Leone for almost a decade: He is an old and good friend of SOF. (below) One of the villages on the Makeni road takes a pasting from Nellis — it is no longer a safe harbor for rebels.



About all that was clear was that the RUF delegation was late. Either that or it was still on its way. So down the road we flew, clipping along about 50 feet above the ground. The idea was that by staying low we'd surprise the convoy especially since they'd be pretty certain to have anti-aircraft guns mounted.

"The way I read it, I was certain that we'd have the advantage of surprise. Anyway, the last thing the gooks would be expecting was an attack. As far as they were concerned, they'd have safe passage: after all, the meeting had been the UN's idea in the first place. Nobody

had told them that Garba was acting on his own," said Nellis.

Contact!

Shortly after the village of Macut, about 8 miles from Makeni town and just as the gunship breasted a low hill, Nellis spotted a two-vehicle convoy heading towards him. In front was a Toyota Landcruiser, escorted by two motorcycles. A pickup with a 12.7mm AA gun mounted on the back followed a couple of hundred yards behind.

Hassan, the unit's Shi'ite sidegunner led out a whoop as he and French merc, Christophe, joined the action. They set about picking off targets at random with their GPMGs.

The next time Nellis struck, he used his rockets. A couple of rebels who hadn't gapped it were trying to swing round the big gun around but were having problems. In one salvo, he put 16 rockets into the pickup, eight from each pod. As he recounted afterwards, "Thus were a few more gooks sacrificed for the cause."

What emerged the next day and set in train the country's biggest political rumpus for months, was that Nellis had knocked out the convoy radio on his first pass, taking off the radioman's hand in the process. Consequently, nobody at either Lunsar or Makeni had any idea what had taken place. Only after dark — and then very tentatively, for fear of a night strike — did another convoy set from Makeni to find the RUF interim leader. With Sankoh in jail, Sesay had been appointed effective head.

As it was, Sesay had been lucky and only lightly hurt, though there were 10 kills, including several senior regional commanders. In the end, nobody escaped injury.

Red-Handed

What was more damaging — especially to future United Nations/RUF relations — was that typically, Garba never bothered to put in an appearance at Lunsar. Had he done so, the Nigerian might have had a case to argue. Nor did he even bother to indicate that he wasn't



One of the huge Antonov 124 transporters (above) used to ferry UN supplies, men and equipment into Sierra Leone. In spite of massive infusions of men and materiel from Third World armies, actually getting the job done usually falls to a few good men, such as Neall Ellis, or the British contingent. (right) The new boy on the block in UN all-white livery is this large Mi-26 transport chopper. It is being used to ferry between Lungi and Conakry in nearby Republic of Guinea.



Nellis's immediate reaction was to go straight in. With the first bike in his sights, he fired his Gatling, disintegrating the target. Driver and bike ended up in a crumpled bloody mass into the bush. The second one wobbled around a moment or two and ran headlong into a ditch. By now the Landcruiser was before him.

Nellis shattered its windscreen with the next burst and its tank ignited, followed by an explosion.

In the split second that followed, the driver of the pickup coming along behind slammed on brakes and Nellis was able to get in a short burst, almost all of it off target. By then the entire contact couldn't have lasted more than a second or two.

As he banked to come in again, he spotted rebels bombshelling everywhere: most were headed for cover.

With that strike done, there was no more resistance. "We were able to concentrate on eliminating individual members of the delegation who were still trying to escape. Because the bush wasn't as thick as elsewhere, Hassan spotted some of them trying to crawl along a gully and asked me to bank hard to starboard. He did the necessary.

"Obviously, we couldn't get them all. Then a stoppage on the Gatling ended that little exercise. Anyway, we were out of rockets, so I decided to call it a day."

The flow of radio intercepts at Cockerill for the rest of the day didn't stop. They came in rapid succession from all over: Makeni, Kono, even some from Liberia asking what had happened to the General (Sesay). He had disappeared, they said. Clearly, the rebels were rattled.

going to make it.

If the rebels needed proof of complicity, they had the goods on the dreaded Garba.

The immediate reaction of the Nigerian general was forceful. He launched a lengthy diatribe on several British officers who were seconded to the Sierra Leone Army, accusing them of bugging his satellite phone and intercepting his messages. He followed that up with something vitriolic about Whitehall and Britain generally. They had tried to undermine his command, he declared.

But Garba's troubles had only begun. The rebels roundly condemned him in their propaganda broadcasts for playing a double game. Despite assurances, they

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Spy To Spy:

FRIENDS AMONG ENEMIES

The Untold Story of George Bacon, Jr.,

PART III

BY CMDR. CHIP BECK, USNR (RET.)

There is a soldier's code of honor, especially in Special Operations, that says you do not leave a comrade's body in the field of battle — even if it takes 23 years to recover him.

This is the third article of a series in which former enemies — an American spy and a Cuban spy — join together on a humanitarian mission, to attempt what the U.S. Government could not, or would not, do: recover the remains of an ex-CIA agent and SOF correspondent killed in Angola decades ago.

In the first two articles of this series, retired Navy Commander and CIA Officer Chip Beck explained his professional relation and personal friendship with the late George "Kayak" Bacon, who was killed by a Cuban patrol in Angola in 1976.

The second article revealed how his work as a POW Special Investigator led to the discovery, or recovery, of hidden Pentagon files on the Cuban role in the Vietnam War, and with them, an unexpected link to the fate of George Bacon in Angola.

In this segment, the third in the series, the SOF correspondent tells of his trip to Cuba in search of mores answers about Bacon and American POWs in Vietnam, and what he found.

Long after I retired from the Navy in November 1996 and left my assignment as a POW Special Investigator with the Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) of the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO), I traveled to various parts of the world as a journalist, in search of leads and answers to the mysteries of America's unrepatriated POWs — servicemen who were swallowed up by the Soviet Gulag throughout the 20th Century.

The search led to places faraway and close at hand — to pieces of the POW puzzle, and to astonishing people each with sets of clues.

In East Berlin I found a cache of photographs showing East German operations with American POWs, which I obtained from the cameraman who took them, and received a briefing by the intelligence officer who coordinated the operations in Hanoi.

In the snowy mountains of Switzerland I drank hot *gluwein* with an old Cold Warrior whose father and uncle — soldiers both — spent 10 years in the Soviet Gulag after World War II, and whose Hungarian military contacts reported seeing American POWs left over from the Korean War, still alive in Siberia in 1964.

In Nottingham, England, I stayed at the 300-year-old farmhouse of an 83-

year old man, whose breakout from a Siberian Gulag in 1941 with an American secret agent may have been the greatest escape of all time.

In Paris, there was a tantalizing story of Americans held back in Vietnam after the war, only to be executed and cremated, so that no traces of their existence would remain for the Pentagon "bone hunters" to ever find.

Elsewhere in Europe I located multiple sources who separately confirmed each other's story that not only were Americans still alive as POWs in Vietnam as late as November 1979, but two of them temporarily escaped and almost made it to freedom — only to be betrayed by a foreign ambassador I interviewed.

Finally, in Havana, I discovered a cautious willingness on the part of old adversaries to discuss the Cuban role in Vietnam during the war, including the topic of American POWs, to a degree that I found promising, if not yet fully open to revealing all the details.

The Cuban Connection

How strange it was, that in Cuba — the place where I anticipated most resistance — I found more candor than when I discussed the same topic in the Pentagon's DPMO. Present, too, among the seriousness, was a sense of humor,

and a willingness to broach the POW issues and mysteries, moreso than I had encountered in certain offices of the Clinton Administration, where I worked with a Top Secret clearance.

The details of what I learned about nonrepatriated POWs, and what more I hope to learn in the future, will have to wait until the story is more complete, all the sources debriefed, and more leads followed to their end.

But what can be revealed to *SOF* readers is how an American soldier of fortune named George "Kayak" Bacon, was my key to unlocking a door to Cuba, where light was shone on lingering POW mysteries, and where help was obtained from people who were once considered my enemies, and yours.

Some still consider the Cubans our enemy, but based on my travels, I don't think that theory holds water when it comes to the Cuban people. I also found that Cuban government officials, particularly those who had seen combat during the Cold War as young men, are willing to resolve major differences, if we simply sit down at the same table. As one

various other POW improprieties — was an unexpected lead connecting the POW saga in Vietnam and George Bacon's disappearance in Angola.

The link crystallized after I hung up my uniform and started tracking down pieces of information as a journalist. In relatively short order, I learned that Raul Valdez Vivo, a noted Cuban combat correspondent and ambassador to the revolutionary forces in Indochina, whose name I first found buried deep in the hidden, but unclassified, DPMO files, had also been dispatched to Angola less than a year after Saigon fell — much as I had been.

Having once interviewed American POWs held by the VC in Tay Ninh Province in 1965, Valdez was sent to debrief 13 British and American mercenaries who were captured in Angola in 1976 and placed on trial in Luanda. From the Luanda interviews, Valdez produced a book, *El Fin De Mercenarios*, that mapped out leads for me to pursue on where George "Kayak" Bacon might be buried.

Unknown to Valdez, now a senior and semiretired ideologue in Cuba, he

viewed them as prisoners, after they were caught.

Ironically, neither of us wanted that particular group of mercenaries in Angola.

I had served throughout Indochina from 1969 until it all came crashing down in April 1975. Valdez served in the same region for even longer. I was in Angola in 1975 and came into contact there with Cuban POWs. Valdez was there in 1976 interviewing captive Americans. We were both in Laos and Cambodia at the same time. Our paths apparently had crossed for many years.

On 24 November 1998, our paths finally converged, as we shared the stage at the International Press Center (CPI) in Havana during the first *Encuentro Mundial de Corresponsales de Guerra*, or World Meeting of War Correspondents.

Both of us spoke to the international audience about our years of wartime experiences and the impact those conflicts had on the societies caught up in them.

In the front row of the audience at the International Press Center on Calle 23,



General Vang Pao, with George Bacon to his left, points in the direction of an enemy position on the Laotian "Plain of Jars." A Pathet Lao POW is in the foreground, having just provided information.

colonel told me, "The only condition we ask is no conditions." In other words, everything is open to discussion.

Ever since my discovery of the "hidden DPMO Cuba files" in the summer of 1996 (*SOF*, May 01), I wanted to travel to Cuba to talk to the journalists, military attachés and diplomats who served in the jungles of Indochina and Angola, and the intelligence specialists who were in contact with American POWs as part of a joint international political action operation.

In the box of DPMO documents that I uncovered — the contents of which had been improperly hidden by a Pentagon bureaucrat long-suspected of

and I shared similar experiences over the course of our many years in the field. Both of us had the distinction of serving our countries in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Angola, something not too many Americans or Cubans have done.

Secondly, we were each involved in POW sagas in Indochina and Angola, though for different reasons and under different circumstances.

Thirdly, both of us were connected in 1976 to the 13 mercenaries who were on trial, and to a 14th one — Kayak — who was killed during the capture event. I had tried to stop the mercenaries from going to Angola, and Valdez had inter-

viewed them as prisoners, after they were caught. Ironically, neither of us wanted that particular group of mercenaries in Angola. I had served throughout Indochina from 1969 until it all came crashing down in April 1975. Valdez served in the same region for even longer. I was in Angola in 1975 and came into contact there with Cuban POWs. Valdez was there in 1976 interviewing captive Americans. We were both in Laos and Cambodia at the same time. Our paths apparently had crossed for many years. On 24 November 1998, our paths finally converged, as we shared the stage at the International Press Center (CPI) in Havana during the first *Encuentro Mundial de Corresponsales de Guerra*, or World Meeting of War Correspondents. Both of us spoke to the international audience about our years of wartime experiences and the impact those conflicts had on the societies caught up in them. In the front row of the audience at the International Press Center on Calle 23,

was Marta Rojas, a famous Cuban war correspondent who accompanied Valdez on arduous journeys up and down the Ho Chi Minh trail. Together they secretly entered South Vietnam with the National Liberation Front (NLF) and Viet Cong (VC) forces in 1965, to specifically meet and interview several American POWs held in Tay Ninh Province. Because of the contrition the enlisted men demonstrated for their roles in the war, they were among several POWs eventually released in 1969 by the VC, a fact I confirmed before I departed my DPMO post. In addition to talking about my experiences as a Combat Artist in 16 conflict zones of the Cold War (see "Cold War,

Hot Canvas," Jan. 1999) I was in Havana in November 1998 to research other topics, most of which dealt with contentious secret conflicts that have waged between the U.S. and Cuba since the 1959 Revolution and the imposition of the subsequent economic embargo — which the Cubans call *El Bloqueo*.

Included in that research were human drama stories I intend to tell of the simple combatants and field participants from both sides of the Cold War, rather than paying homage to the usual litany of politicians who parade through lofty Washington tomes. Among those stories is how George Bacon went to Angola to fight communism, but who was killed by Cuban soldiers fighting alongside the Marxist Angolan Army (FAPLA).

As readers of this *SOF* series know, I was embarked on a private initiative — on behalf of Bacon's 76-year old parents — to locate the remains of their only son and hopefully recover them for a proper burial befitting the former soldier and veteran.

Using old friends and new contacts, I sought answers to Bacon's whereabouts by going directly to the nations whose forces killed Bacon and put the mercenaries on trial — Cuba and Angola.

In Washington, some DPMO managers just re-read old newspaper clippings or sat around sharpening their pencils. They certainly had not used the information in their "hidden files" for any good purpose for 30 years. They did not even know Americans were missing in Angola.

I decided to approach the Angola leads from two directions. Unfortunately, my best ties in that country were with Jonas Savimbi and the UNITA rebels who are still fighting the Luanda government, the very bureaucracy who might have records on Bacon and his burial site.

Having lived in the African continent from 1975-1980, I still have friends there who travel widely. One, a talented Portuguese-Mozambican-American lady named Laura Maia, fluent in a dozen languages, is a refugee-relief worker with decades of bush experience in war zones. Maia was working in Angola at the time I started this search. I asked her to toss out nets to snare contacts.

By fate, one name Laura came up with was Antonio Dos Santos, then the Angolan Ambassador to Washington. His selection as a possible lead was due to his stature in the Angolan government and past service in FAPLA. Maia had worked with Dos Santos on relief projects and shared her house with the

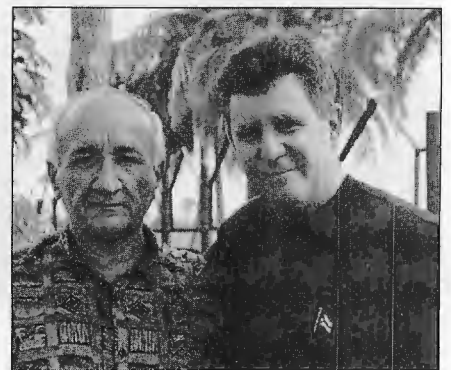


(above) Author (left) stands beside an NVA 107mm rocket on a makeshift launcher at Kiou Kacham, Laos, after the site was recaptured in March 1972 by Guerrilla Battalions (BG) Beck advised in MR-1. Next to Beck is Colonel Thongphanh, the BG Commander, along with Major Onsy. (below, left) Author poses with a Cuban Colonel assigned to the Ministry of External Relations in November 1998. The Ministry approved Beck's trips to Cuba and facilitated his contacts with Cuban military and intelligence officers for interviews on the Bacon case and other stories. (below, right) "Orlando and Chip" — two old soldiers-turned-journalists. The authors poses with the Editor of the Santa Clara daily newspaper in central Cuba. Orlando had been a young military officer in Angola, serving with the MPLA forces opposing UNITA, at the same time Beck was in-country. The two men have met twice during Beck's subsequent trips and exchanged viewpoints over beers, instead of rifle sights.



ambassador's daughter — by a Cuban mother, as I later learned.

I use the term "fate" because Dos Santos was coincidentally identified by one Cuban contact as a likely lead on Bacon's burial. The President of the Cuban Journalist and Editors Union (UPEC), Hugo Riuz, who helped organize the War Correspondents Meeting in Havana, knew Dos Santos when they were students at Havana University in



the 1960s. After a 10-year hiatus, they met again — when the two served in northern Angola at the same time I was running around southern Angola, and later when the American-British mercenaries were captured and Kayak killed.

Eventually, I plan to go to Angola to help retrieve Kayak's remains, but like any treasure hunter knows, the "archives" first have to be researched and the location of the buried item — be it gold or a soldier — has to be pinpointed, or at least approximated to within a workable range. The best set of archives, I figured, were either in

Luanda or Havana. Havana was closer, so I set my sights on Cuba first.

Getting On The Island

During my years in the military and intelligence services, I never set foot in Cuba, not even Guantanamo Naval Base. I had flown past Cuba, sailed around it, studied it, seen pictures, played its music, talked to its exiles, fought its soldiers, and even entertained its diplomats during Cold War spy games, but I never walked its beaches or its streets.

In a sense, the U.S. conflict with Cuba resembles two New York gangs spraying political graffiti on alley walls at night without facing their rivals in the light of day.

I've always been curious about how the Cubans lived, felt, and thought at home. I wanted to see the reality of their lives and settings for myself, for I did not fully trust the propaganda or editorial cartoons that I myself sometimes helped construct during the Cold War. What I knew was incomplete, and firsthand knowledge was what I wanted.

Some politicians and a minority of Americans don't want new, updated perspectives. New facts might disturb old hatreds. Bitterness for them is like an old friend — not a good friend, just an old one they are comfortable around.

Travel to Cuba by Americans is governed by U.S. Treasury regulations imposed under the American embargo, rules which I fully honored in my island trips.

Most U.S. travel agencies are prohibited from making Cuba-bound reservations for travelers. Hundreds of American tourists "run the blockade" by flying first to Mexico, Jamaica, or the Bahamas, and then catching shuttle flights to Havana.

As a former "spook," I've used unconventional ways to enter and exit countries, but given what I was trying to accomplish, the last thing I wanted to do was circumvent U.S. regulations. As a journalist, I qualified for a Press Visa under U.S. and Cuban rules. I notified Langley's Office of Security that I intended to make the trip, not for their permission, but to prevent heart attacks and alarm bells from going off if my name turned up on some list, like Kayak's had 25 years before. Under old agreements, my writings, speeches, and History Channel appearances generally have to go through a prepublication review process, which have always gone smoothly. I may criticize some bureaucrats, and offer opposing viewpoints, but I know how to stay away from



One important lead to the photographs in this SOF series came by accident, when the author and Cuban Combat Photographer Casaña (above) discovered they'd been in Angola at the same time. Beck noticed a bridge in southern Angola in Casaña's photographs on display that he had also shot a month before the Cuban. In discussing the irony, Beck learned that two of Casaña's colleagues had been with the patrol that killed George Bacon and captured the mercenaries. (below) Hugo Riuz, President of the Cuban Editors and Journalists Union (UPEC), was a young war correspondent in northern Angola, operating not far from where Bacon and his colleagues were engaged. Although Riuz was not present when Bacon was killed, he provided several leads to Cuban and Angolan officers who may possess additional information.



exposing genuine "sources and methods" that still must be protected.

One category of Americans who can travel to Cuban under an automatic A-1 Treasury Department License are journalists, editors, publishers, and other employees of regular news-gathering organizations. As a correspondent for both APB News and *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine, I qualified for a Press Visa from the Cuban Government and was permitted to travel (and spend the \$100 per day allowed) under Treasury regulations.

One additional problem, which most tourists and journalists don't face, was due to my 33-year Navy and CIA career. As an intelligence professional, I knew that the Cuban counterintelligence folks were going to raise their eyebrows and alarm bells would go off in Havana. I knew the reaction certain "classes" of visitors caused any country — and a CIA Special Operations officer was one of them.

Fortunately, I had a solution: Shed a lifetime of going in back doors, and walk in the front for a change. Under the terms of my 1993 retirement from the clandestine service, I was allowed to "come in from the Cold," or leave "overtly," as retirement branch terms it. Under overt status, I can admit to my "sordid past," as I humorously call it. I retired that way to prevent misconceptions among editors, journalists, and 200 editorial cartoonists who are my friends.

On a humorous note, I found more acceptance for my CIA past on the part of old KGB, HVG, and DGI officers (all communist intelligence services), than I did recently with two U.S. State Department ambassadors who had not guessed my "true identity" in the past!

Honesty did turn out to be the best policy. The first test came when I visited the Cuban Interest Section in Spring 1998 to meet the Press Attaché, Luis Mariano Fernandez. "I see by your résumé that you were a Navy Commander," he said at first glance.

"Yes, and a retired CIA officer as well," I added, saving him the trouble of reading further.

As predicted by Negrete, the press attaché's eyebrows raised and his eyes widened, but he recovered quickly and we got down to discussing my desire to go to Cuba to research my book and seek help on the Bacon case.

Since I knew certain questions would come up anyway, once my request reached Havana, I went ahead and answered them without being asked. I wasn't giving away any secrets, just being frank.

"First, I'm not here to defect and, two, I'm not spying for the U.S. government," disavowing two obvious scenarios. "I am going to ask your people for secrets, but I'm going to ask openly. I'm also going to ask my government to declassify material for the book I have in mind."

"What's in it for us?" was the general question eventually raised. "Why should we help?"

"Because I personally think the time has come for our countries to resolve our differences and become genuine good neighbors. As far as I'm concerned, Fidel has won 'the battle of presidents' on points. He's outlasted nine, maybe even 10, U.S. heads of state. There's no need for the Cuban people to suffer the embargo, and I'm willing to say so in my book."

I explained that the book would not hide the problems both our countries inflicted on each other, or suffered. I intend to write objectively and factually about unknown aspects of U.S.-Cuban history, to include little-known skirmishes that occurred in distant places as Vietnam, the Congo, Angola, the Sahel, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Middle East and elsewhere.

"We've been enemies, but it's time to be friends. I was officially an enemy, but now I'm retired. I can be friends with anyone I want. Your side did what you believed in. I and my friends did what we thought was right. Now we need to stop fighting, sit down and solve problems, face-to-face, as professionals."

My views were obviously transmitted to the Ministry of External Relations (MINREX) in one form or another. As expected, approval for my trip did not materialize immediately. In fact, the one time I met with Luis Fernandez that

summer, he seemed a bit embarrassed at the approval delay and wasn't sure how to explain the problem.

"I passed your visitation request with my recommendation that they approve it, but you know, some people still have some questions about why you want to come."

"You mean your counter-intelligence people?" I said openly. I had expected that.

"Well, yes. They are a bit surprised and suspicious. They have questions about whether you might still be working for, you know, 'the company.'"

"I understand their concerns. It's natural. I'm not working for the company. I'm working for me, and I am trying to write a book and find my friend, Kayak. Tell them that if they have any questions about my retired status or my journalistic intentions, to just ask those questions, through you."

While we were negotiating on the ground rules for my proposed trip to Cuba regarding the book and the Bacon case, Fernandez told me about the gathering of international war correspondents that was to take place in November. By then, he knew that I was the Navy's official Combat Artist for Operation Desert Storm, and that I had hundreds of drawings from many wars.

"I am sure this correspondents' meeting would be fascinating, and it would give you a chance to meet Cuban journalists who served in the countries you are interested in," the press attaché said. He suggested that I deliver a paper on combat art and travel to Cuba for that specific journalistic gathering.

As it turned out, that was an incredibly good suggestion. People that I wanted to meet, and needed to meet, to help



Beck thanks and shakes hands with Orlando Fundora, Director of the Cuban Peace Movement Foundation, a quasi-private, or non-governmental, group in Havana, for providing photographs and material related to the Bufkin-Callan mercenary group. Amongst the photographs provided, the Cubans hoped, were pictures of George Bacon. It was not to be. Fundora was ill and out of Havana during the author's third visit, but the pair hopes to meet again in the near future.

with the Bacon search, were also at that Encuentro. Some, like Valdez and Rojas, I expected. Others, like Hugo Riuz and a combat photographer named Casaña, I learned about only by being there.

In October 1998, several months after I initiated my request to visit Cuba as a journalist, approval came back for my attendance at the War Correspondents meeting. I was told I could also meet with MINREX and military representatives to discuss the book, propose channels for research in Cuba, find people I wanted to interview, and pursue the Bacon case.

I arrived in Havana the night of 22 November. It was exactly 35 years before, the night after President John Kennedy was assassinated, that I had made my decision as an 18-year old student to study international affairs.

My first full day in Cuba, 23 November, was my 53rd birthday. Not exactly the place Americans normally spend their birthdays, but as it turned out, it was quite a nice one.

I started the day by chairing the opening panels at the War Correspondence Conference. The keynote speaker was none other than Raul Valdez Vivo, one of the men I wanted to meet. A young man from the MINREX, Luis Manuel Fernandez, who was assigned to facilitate my official meetings and help out with my stay in general, had studied under Valdez, who teaches part-time at the Cuban Ideological Institute. He introduced me to Valdez before the session began, laying the



A wounded mercenary cries out in pain as severe leg wounds are dressed by Cuban Army medics. Since the publication of the first installment of this series, Canadian writer Don North called the author and said that this merc might be a fellow Canadian journalist by the name of "Douglas Newby."

foundation for a future interview.

As it turned out, both Valdez and Rojas had to leave the International Press Center before the panel session was completed. However, there were so many people in attendance at the conference who had served in Vietnam and Angola, that it was a great place to start networking for leads.

That evening, I held my first meeting about Kayak with a military representative, a colonel who asked that I use my journalistic discretion to keep his identity confidential, which I have done.

As expected, my request for humanitarian assistance on the Bacon case, and on the book project, was still meeting skepticism in some quarters.

Again, this was not surprising, given my background and career. After a frank conversation, laced with humor, the ice was broken. After that, the cooperation I received was not only good, but at times enthusiastic.

Credit Where Credit Is Due

On 1 December 1998, I returned from nine days in Cuba with leads on six people who might know generally or specifically where Bacon was buried. They included two Cuban combat photographers, one Cuban patrol leader, two FAPLA officers, one Cuban army officer, and, in addition, possibly an Angolan Ambassador.

The officials I needed to reach were in Havana, Luanda, and in foreign embassies in Washington.

To begin the recovery of a fallen veteran who died in one of the Cold War's hot spots meant that old adversaries had to shake hands across the political divide. We embarked on a humanitarian mission that could eventually help change Cuban-American relations on official levels, if common sense ever bridges the existing chasm.

Long ago, when Kayak was killed, I thought it was a terrible waste of a good life — a death that served no purpose. Now, 23 years later, his death had served to bring old enemies together. If we could cooperate in recovering his remains, was there a chance we could even help in some small way to bring our countries back together?

If so, maybe his death would finally serve some grand purpose that Kayak had not reached in life.

Return To Cuba

During the first trip to Cuba in November 1998, I laid the groundwork for cooperation on the Bacon case, and obtained several leads that needed to be

pursued at different levels. My MINREX facilitator, Luis Manuel, advised me that the Cuban Army was examining archives from the Angolan war to obtain details on Kayak's death and his field burial site. Since the files were of old events, the search could not be completed before my first trip had ended.

Since I planned to return again in February 1999 with 18 of my editorial cartoonist colleagues from the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC) and National Cartoonists Society, he hoped to have more information then, which he did.

During the War Correspondents meeting, I was shown films taken by Cuban and communist bloc journalists of American POWs during the Vietnam War. Some footage I recognized from communist news releases back in the 1960s and 1970s, but most footage was new to me. The black and white films were scratchy and obviously deteriorating, so I was glad I had taken the steps to come when I did.

I asked if I returned to Cuba with a small team of former POWs and MIA-family members familiar with the identities of American POWs, could we examine the footage, and other photographic holdings to see if any POWs depicted might be among those who did not return?

The answer I received was positive — the Cubans will allow such a group through humanitarian channels permitted under existing agreements — a decision we reached after discussing practical matters Havana was concerned about which have solutions.

I also broached the sensitive issue of Soviet-sponsored East German and Cuban programs in Vietnam that allegedly put their officers in direct contact with American POWs. There are some astounding linkages to what happened in Vietnam with events elsewhere in the Cold War, which I will write about at a later time, since they are quite detailed and the investigation and discussions are not yet completed.

After my first trip to Cuba, I returned twice again, in 1999 and 2000, and have yet a fourth trip planned for March 2001. During the second trip, the Cubans indicated they had found more details on the "mercenary incident" and a general trail as to where Kayak was buried, but they had not pinpointed the precise location.

I was told that Kayak and three other mercenaries killed on 13 February in combat encounters, were loaded on a short-range helicopter and flown to a

nearby country town — San Antonio du Zaire — north of the combat incident, and off-loaded for burial. The distance to Luanda, a lack of adequate ground- or air-transportation, and the tropical heat, all combined for a decision to bury the foreigners in the field, after photographs and identification papers were taken.

I was provided photographs of some dead and live mercenaries that were taken by Cuban combat photographers by Señor Orlando Fundora, Director of



Cuban Army Private Rodriguez was just 17-years-old when he was captured by UNITA women in a coastal mountain village. After three days of E & E, in October 1975, the private was weak from hunger and entered a village in search of food. He was stoned by the villagers before being captured. The author, who came across the young soldier shortly afterward, ensured that he was not further harmed. He was, in fact, well-treated until he was exchanged for South African POWs held by the MPLA.

the *Movimiento de Paz* foundation, which had been designated as the conduit for the humanitarian exchanges we were entering into in the Bacon case. After examining these photos with old comrades who knew Kayak, such as "Digger" and "Hardnose," we concluded Kayak was not among the three dead men shown. I was told that photos involving the fourth mercenary — possibly Kayak — were known to exist but had not been located.

On my *third* trip to Cuba in 2000, I was told that Kayak was reportedly buried, with the three mercs, on "the north side of a road between two villages, not far from San Antonio du Zaire." The Cuban Army archives did not have the names of the actual soldiers conducting the burial detail, and it was not even clear if the gravediggers were Cuban or Angolan. The Cubans were

Continued on page 86

Omega PROVIN Ground

Springfield Super Match

by John Culbertson

Custom



Since my combat days in the rice fields and jungled mountains of Vietnam, I have been an avid shooter and true believer in the combat effectiveness of the U.S. rifle caliber .308 NATO M14, now commercially manufactured by Springfield Armory of Geneseo, Ill. The M14/M1A rifle takes its place on a long line of Springfield rifles that have served American forces since the Civil War. The 1863 rifle musket; the 1903 Springfield .30-06 of World War I; the finest battle rifle ever made the M1 Garand; and its improved cousin the M14 have killed more enemies of the United States than every other rifle combined.

I called my friend Dale Rider at Springfield's Tactical Rifle Custom Shop and got the scoop on the new M1A Super Match Rifle. After hearing Dale describe the custom features on the rifle, I got his personal guarantee that my gun would

be hand-fitted, polished, and personally assembled by Dale himself. For those shooters who have not heard of Dale Rider's magic with tactical rifles, let me give his background in brief. Around 1990, Dale became a riflesmith with the Naval Warfare Center, in Crane, Ind., and created and assembled custom tactical rifles for the SEAL Teams and the Coast Guard Drug Interdiction Units. Springfield Armory hired Dale last year to become Director of the Match Rifle Division which caters to police SWAT units and some civilian high-power shooters.

As an old Marine grunt with 11 major operations in Vietnam under my belt, as well as being a high expert rifleman and a graduate of 1st Marine Division Sniper School under Gunnery Sergeant V. D. Mitchell, who developed the Marine Sniper School in Vietnam, Dale and Springfield Armory were

happy to let me promote their new generation M1A/M14.

The new rifle arrived at my home in Oklahoma City where I shoot regularly at the Oklahoma City Gun Club. The stock on the M1A was superb walnut, oversized but custom sculpted and finished to fit my body. The rifle had the new rear-lugged receiver glass bedded into the walnut inletting with Marine-Tex fiberglass boat sealant that is the only reliable glass bedding material that resists solvent degeneration. Dale discovered this material while researching marine bedding materials. The glass bedding and rear-lugged receiver spreads out the recoil and stops movement of the receiver within the stock.

The barrel is Krieger's new stainless steel, 6-groove, super-match heavy barrel with a fast 1-in-10-inch twist. The fast-twist rifling is designed to shoot the brand new Hornady tactical Application Police 168-grain match boattail bullet. The trigger was above national match quality and was completely honed and polished with a lighter contact at the sear/hammer hook lockup. Yet the trigger broke like glass at a shade under four pounds and felt like two pounds to me. There was no over-travel or creep whatever in the trigger and the point of the trigger was filed off to increase the leverage of the trigger squeeze.

A Harris bipod was fitted to the stock just ahead of the

Springfield Armory M1A Super Match Rifle

Caliber:	.308 NATO 7.62x51mm
Operation:	Gas-operated, short recoil, rotating bolt.
Weight, empty:	9.1 lbs.
Length:	44.3 inches.
Magazine:	Detachable 20-rounds.
Barrel:	Krieger stainless national match 1-in-10-inch twist, 6-groove.
Trigger:	Custom 3.5-pound pull weight
Sights:	Springfield National Match
Scope:	Burris 6-24X 50mm AO Tactical mildot with ARMS detachable rings and base.
Retail price:	Rifle — \$3,500.00.
Manufacturer:	Springfield Armory Tactical Rifle Shop, Springfield, Inc. Dept. SOF, 420 West main Street, Geneseo, IL 61254 phone: 309-944-5631 website: www.springfield-armory.com.



front sling swivel and really controlled the rifle's 12.5-pound weight during firing. The gas system was honed and polished to close tightly at 5 o'clock and lock up at 6 o'clock for zero gas loss. The operating rod and operating spring guide were hand-fitted match grade assemblies as were the rifle's entire parts assemblage.

I fired the rifle prone with standard NATO ammunition at 100 meters and shaved a bit off a 1-inch group of three shots. I think with match ammunition from Hornady or Lake City I could hold .5 MOA. At 300 meters, the rifle still shot inside four inches for a 5-shot group. At 55 years old, I don't shoot like I used to at 21 in the Marines. I do, however, know a superior rifle when I shoot one. Springfield Armory and my Oklahoma-born partner, Dale Rider, have really done their homework in fashioning the finest custom combat rifle I have ever seen. This rifle is superior to the U.S. M16A2 in 5.56mm in every regard, particularly in downrange bullet energy which is three times the performance of the .223 round. The Marine Corps should have never shelved the M14, especially when Springfield has worked out the kinks and can deliver a true sniper-grade rifle with 20-round magazine capacity, break-away firepower for sniper teams under attack.

I want to praise Springfield and Dale Rider again for the chance to relive my glory days as a Marine Marksman. I can't wait until my buddies in the 5th Marine Snipers see this weapon. Hell, some of 'em just might re-enlist. ☒



CONTACT SHEET

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Patriotism, professionalism and all that aside, it was generally rather difficult to muster up much enthusiasm for a combat operation in the Mekong Delta back in 1968. There were two basic reasons for this: First, you could get very seriously killed out there, and, second, our intelligence was notoriously bad, which led to a lot of useless thrashing around. At the company level, the only time we ever really knew where the Viet Cong were and what they were up to was when they were shooting at us, which was not very useful from an intelligence perspective.

Usually, "objectives" were selected at random and consisted of nothing more than patches of green on the map, representing vegetated areas where the VC might be hiding. Sometimes a team of armed helicopters, a "Loach" (LOH, light observation helicopter) covered by a gunship, would snoop around in the greenery, and we would respond to their sightings or suspicions. As a result the guys in a rifle company spent a good deal of their time conducting blind insertions into these areas, looking for our highly mobile and elusive foe. This was called "jitterbugging."

On a typical jitterbug, a target would be selected, and the battalion command element would conduct an aerial recon. Sometimes tube artillery fire or ARA (aerial rocket artillery) from the gunships would be directed onto the objective, but at others we went in with only the guns covering. It all depended. The assault force would be ferried to the target area aboard 10 unarmed lift helicopters known as "slicks," each of which held six combat-loaded troops. Because of the imaginative stratagems employed by everyone to avoid going to the field, it was often difficult to muster the 60 men required to fill up the birds. The tactics employed on the

ground varied widely, predicated on whether or not we met any resistance, but, hot or not, we would always conduct a sweep of the area — if we could. If it turned out to be a "dry hole," we would form-up to get pulled out by the slicks while the gunships flew around like aerial sharks, covering the extraction. We would repeat this exercise over and over until we either made contact or ran out of "blade-time" (the amount of time the helicopters and crews were allowed to fly in one 12-hour period).

To those of us on the ground, jitterbugging was little more than a fishing expedition. We were simply used as bait, to be cast into a likely spot to see if a really big "fish" would be attracted. If the VC bit, reinforcements would be rushed to the scene in an attempt to fillet the offenders — after they had already chewed us up in the process. If there were no nibbles, we would be pulled out, then thrown into a different location. It was not as bad as being a worm, though; it was more like they were baiting the hook with a poisonous snake, since we could take care of any fish that was smaller than us.

No Real Concept

At that time, very few, if any, of the senior officers flying around in the command and control helicopters had never actually fought in a Vietnam-type environment, and had no real concept of what we had to do to survive down on the ground. The terrain itself was appalling: a choice of wet or dry rice paddies, mangrove swamps, primary or secondary jungle, banana groves, rubber plantations, the Plain of Reeds — or unfriendly villages. Simply slogging through any of that real estate day after day was totally debilitating, but when you threw in the cobras and kraits, the snipers and booby traps, the ambushes and skirmishes, not to mention the large enemy units out there wandering around, it was almost overwhelming. From their lofty vantage points in the C&C birds, I often thought the senior officers viewed us as simply pieces on a chessboard — which often moved in the "wrong" direction, or not at all.

When Every Man Steps Forward

Anyway, that is certainly what I thought one morning in the late spring of 1968 when "Charlie" Company of the 2nd of the 39th Infantry, was out jitterbugging. It was our first insertion of the day, and, as usual, the target was simply a place on the map where we had not been before. There were gunships on station, but a Loach was checking a semipopulated area along the canal much further to the west, and they were covering him. We were in a staggered-trail-right formation, with my little command group in the third aircraft of the right-hand column, and while everyone else was enjoying the ride, I was trying to hear the instructions, shouted by the Battalion S3 over the radio, that were generally drowned out by a cacophony of turbine engines and whirling rotor blades.

"Werewolf, this is Top Gun 3. We're going to put you in by that foot bridge down there. Move your element west on the canal, with forces on each side. The little bird has some movement in the village. Do you Roger? Over."

"Top Gun 3, this is Werewolf. Roger that. Over."

"This is Top Gun 3, use the bridge to get part of your people across, then sweep down both sides. Cover your right flank. How copy? Over."

"Werewolf, here, good copy!" I shouted, while thinking, "Right, right, you don't have to tell me how to suck eggs."

While getting my marching orders from the S-3, I was also attempting to orient my map, get a visual fix on the objective, yell instructions to my RTO (radio/telephone operator) on the company net, unfold the metal stock of my submachine gun, and keep from falling out of the goddamn helicopter. On the map and from the door, I could see a wide strip of nipa palm growing profusely along a canal that ran generally east-west, bordered on the north by a banana grove that covered several grid squares. The village in question was about a klick down the canal, which did not interest me much. No sweat. I gave brief instructions to the platoon leaders, all the while checking out the scene below us. In the area where we were going to land, the only distinctive feature I could discern was a fairly substantial footbridge spanning the canal and leading to the parallel road that had been constructed

from the dirt originally dug out during its construction. There was also an anomalous sort of archway on our end of the span, with what appeared to be a bunch of boxes stacked up beside it, but the truly odd thing, which I noticed as we drew closer, was that there appeared to be three dudes hunkered down behind the boxes staring up at us — and all three were wearing black pajamas. Christ! The whole setup looked like a goddamn VC tax-collection point.

I was on my hands and knees now, peering out to get a better look, while trying to hold on to the door frame with my left hand, gripping the handset of the radio on the company freq in my right, and with my 9mm MP40 "Schmeisser" submachine gun dangling by its sling from my left arm. (The MP40 has always been known — quite erroneously — as a "Schmeisser.")

"Mouse," my RTO on the battalion push (frequency), was banging me on the shoulder with the handset yelling something in my ear, but I was tired of talking to higher, and yelled back for him to call the C&C and ask them who the clowns were down by the bridge, since nobody seemed overly concerned about them. What the hell, everybody wore black pajamas, maybe they were friendlies, refugees from the Kit Carson Scout Program, or maybe just peasants on their way to town.

Sonofabitch! Now what? From the approach path we were using I calculated that we would land within 50 meters of the three toads who were crouched behind the boxes, which I now saw were arranged like a table and chairs. My heart started to thump and I noticed that my hands were sweaty even in the cool breeze of the 90-knot slipstream.

"If those guys are hostiles, they're gonna have a clear shot at us when we hit the ground," I thought, turning to the RTO and shouting, "Hey, Mouse, what the hell does Major Rice say?"

Before he could answer, we touched down in the open area in front of the bridge, at which point all three turned in choreographed unison and leaped into the canal. Now I was afraid that one of the doorgunners *would* begin shooting and

by Col. Mike Peck (Ret.)

PHOTOS COURTESY AUTHOR

Remembrances From Vietnam

PART I

start a feeding frenzy while my guys were still jumping out of the birds and trying to get formed up. After exiting and scuttling free of the rotors, I popped the bolt handle of the MP40 out of its anti-bounce notch and jacked the bolt back. I noted in so doing that the “express-type” 200-meter rear sight leaf was folded up, from the previous day’s activities, which obscured the 100-meter notch; I quickly flipped it down, then crabbed toward the bridge, bringing the Schmeisser up to survey the situation from its point of view.

Two of the black-clad figures had crossed the canal and were about to scramble up the far bank, but the third was nowhere to be seen. Just short of the stacked up boxes, I stopped, leaned slightly forward, then lined up on the lower left side of the port dude, calculating that the climb of the gun on full-auto would sweep up and across the starboard Dick in the same burst. While I was admiring my sight picture, the third guy popped up out of the canal with an AK, still on my side. His sudden appearance startled me, already pumped up with excitement (or fear), and, as he was bringing his rifle up, he foolishly took the luxury to wipe his hand across his face.

I was already in a firing position with the slack taken-up on the SMG’s trigger, and reflexively opened fire while swinging the weapon down to engage him. This threw up a spectacular series of water fountains where the first bullets impacted, but the rest of the burst took him full-amidships. I gave him half of the 32-round magazine, which threw him backwards into the water, then, instead of coolly lighting a cigar and engaging the other two, I continued to pepper the canal where he had gone under, emptying my weapon, wondering, “For Chrissakes, where the hell is everybody?”

As I crouched down to reload, dumping the MP40 magazine down the front of my fatigue jacket, and fumbling another out of its carrier, I started bawling at my gang, “Goddamit, shoot those two assholes! What the hell’s the matter with you guys?”

Everyone must have thought that these fine fellows were friendly villagers out for an invigorating morning swim, followed by a healthy little jog through the woods, but finally, Specialist Rougelot, one of my truly gifted machine-gunners opened up with his M60, getting off only a short burst before the goddamn thing jammed. That broke the ice, but by then

the remaining two dinks were headed into the banana grove at warp speed. Adios, amigos.

After we fished him out of the canal, everybody clustered around to check out the guy who didn’t make it, with all of them casting furtive glances in my direction. Although we all knew that the escapees were long gone, I sent two platoons across the canal to sweep into the vegetation, covering them from the near bank with the third, while the CP Group collected up all the documents scattered around by the helicopters’ rotor wash.

Open Mouth, Insert Foot

“I think we really fucked this one up,” observed Sergeant First Class Williams, my 2nd Platoon Leader and principal *consigliere*, “Those other two must have been a pair of high-rollers, to leave that poor son of a bitch back to take on the whole company.” He jerked his head toward the guy I had just shot to hamburger.

“Jesus, what the hell got into everybody? Why didn’t somebody open up on them?” I asked, shaking my head.

“I guess because the gunships and doorgunners didn’t nail them, everybody thought they

were OK. They didn’t run or anything. At least not ‘til we landed,” he replied.

“Yeah, I guess I really didn’t know what to think either,” I admitted.

All the excitement brought Lieutenant Colonel Leggett and Major Rice down to inspect the damage. In a dumb sort of way I actually felt relatively pleased with myself, sort of like a cat that just caught a mouse and drops it at his master’s feet. They were fairly happy with the KIA and the box of documents, but then I had to foolishly blurt out our theory that the other two guys must have been VIPs, so, instead of loading-up and jitterbugging into a new location, they sent us off to pursue the fleeing VC in the banana grove.

We were all in super shape, but banana groves were really bad news — in a bad news business. They had been built by the French, years before, and consisted of entire sections of neatly constructed canals about 10-feet wide, some of which stretched on for kilometers. The canals irrigated strips of earth about 20-feet wide, on which the trees were planted.

A combat-loaded troop could use the dirt strip to get a



That’s me giving an ops briefing to my subordinates at my company CP at FSB Moore.



Lift choppers on the PZ at FSB Moore. The firebase observation tower is in the right background.

running start and jump the canal on the other side, then run and jump the next, and the next. He could usually manage about five canals before becoming completely winded. Then it became a matter of sloshing down, knee-deep in the viscous mud and waist-deep in the filthy water, then struggling across to clamber up the other side, on and on and on.

They were as deadly as rain forests, since the VC could suck you into devastating traps in there, where they could get enfilade fire down the open canals, as well as maximum concealment in the foliage and down behind the banks. When that happened, ammo resupplies and medevacs were problematic because of the thick vegetation and the fact that it was almost impossible to remain orientated in all that green monotony and vastness.

Popasan Smoke

I attempted to dissuade the Colonel and Major, since the VC were long gone, and I did not relish the thought of stumbling into anything really big — if those guys actually were important. It soon became apparent, though, that the helicopters had been pulled for another mission, and now the banana grove was the only game in town for the 2-39th.

Because of my alligator mouth, we all spent a miserable morning thrashing around in a man-made swamp, accomplishing little more than wasting our time and getting tired. That was bad enough, but the CO stayed overhead, continually badgering us to “Pop smoke, pop smoke,” to locate our position for his command party, then bitching because we were moving so slowly. This shit went on until we finally stumbled onto a little hooch located on a sort of island under the trees, with some ancient dude sitting outside on a bench smoking a marijuana joint. He immediately became a hit with the troops, who found this all to be very amusing, making smart-ass comments while I questioned the old man in Vietnamese. Of course, he didn’t know nothin’ ’bout no VC.

While I was trying to make sense out of the ramblings of this octogenarian idiot, who was stoned in the bargain, one of the RTO’s joked, “Ya know, Boss, that old fart looks exactly like Ho Chi Minh,” which was *sorta* true.

This gave me an idea, and, although it was a dirty trick to play on the old man, I called the circling C&C bird to report that we had just captured one of the runaway dinks, whom we had determined to be a high-ranking VC official — at least a regimental commander — and we wanted to evacuate him. That worked like magic, and we then simply did a “column right,” walking out of the monster maze on one of the dirt strips where most of the trees had died.

I told my skeptical leaders not to be fooled by my prize’s advanced age (or the fact that he smelled like he had spent his whole life harvesting Mary Jane in the Golden Triangle), so away they went with him, while we got picked up and sent back to the fire base to get ready to assault the VC regiment once the old bird sang. Right!

Anyway, the bottom line of all this is simply to emphasize that an air assault was something no one *ever* volunteered for.

There was one exception, however.

In next month’s issue Mike Peck takes us into the jaws of battle as his Vietnam saga continues.

Colonel Mike Peck (Ret.), a highly decorated Vietnam veteran, was previously director of DIA’s POW/MIA office in Washington, D. C. Presently, he is an international security consultant. ✕



En route to an air assault. Usually not a lot of fun, and you never knew what was waiting for you. (below) Typical Delta canal showing the parallel road made with the dirt dug out of the canal. No banana groves, though.



A Letter From Tim McVeigh

The Militarization Of Law Enforcement

To the Editor:

In this post-Cold War era, *SOF* has periodically struggled to find relevant content for its pages. To fill this void, Bob Brown has of late adopted the subtle promotion of militarized civilian law enforcement as his bread and butter. The nation has seen this police-state mentality come to fruition before, at places like Ruby Ridge and Waco, and it is disturbing to see your magazine once again drifting in this direction.

A sometimes overlooked or underestimated danger of a standing army is the "filter-down" effect: the unabated outpouring of military personnel into civilian law enforcement jobs. This, in turn, has the effect of slowly (but predictably) devolving the concept of "protect and serve" into one of "assault and conquer." (This mindset is further promoted and encouraged by such rhetoric as "the war on drugs," and by "law and order Republicans" who, consciously or not, while claiming to be staunchly anti-Communist, are simply totalitarians of a different color.)

While law enforcement recruitment efforts pitch military adventure as a way to lure applicants, these efforts ultimately leave recruits believing that it is their job to be militaristic. While it may be gung-ho macho to strap on an assault rig and kick in a door, is this really the America you want to live in? Should *SOF* be encouraging this "war at home" mentality? Such fare may sell magazines (or reservations at Thunder Ranch) but at what ultimate cost?

Sincerely,

Tim McVeigh
Terre Haute, IN



AP/Wide World

Reply:

It was not — and never will be — the intent of *SOF*'s editorial policy to advocate the misuse, overuse or abuse of law enforcement powers by anyone, either civilian or military. We believe that serious constitutional questions come into play when the fine line between civilian and military overlap into what we're seeing today: the virtual militarization of law enforcement and federal takeovers of civilian police departments. Our editorial stance is readily apparent to anyone who will peruse back issues of *SOF*, particularly "The Thin Blurry Line," Mar '99 and "Good-Bye, Columbus," Feb '01.

We at *SOF*, however, fully support those members of our military and civilian law enforcement communities who have exhibited lawful discharge of their legally assigned duties in concert with the U.S. Constitution and who have accomplished frequent acts of selfless heroism in the line of duty.

But we also recognize the threat spoken of by Mr. McVeigh: ... devolving the concept of "protect and serve" into one of "assault and conquer."

We do not want to see America devolve into a police state, for whatever reason: the war against drugs, the war against terrorism, the war against street crime, take your pick.

SOF totally supports and defends the United States Constitution and the rights of each individual against all enemies, whether they be foreign — or domestic.

— Robert K. Brown
Editor/Publisher ✕

own "crisp" esthetic, these Colts are as appealing as they are rugged and functional.

For further information on their line of Colt® knives, write United Cutlery, Dept. SOE, 1425 United Blvd., Sevierville, TN 37876; phone 423-428-2532; and check out their website at : www.unitedcutlery.com.

Dry-Cells

Your pappy probably advised you to "do one thing and do it right," and that, of course, was good advice. It would seem that whoever was the patriarch of the boys down at Best Made Designs (Spec-Ops Brand) told them at his knee, "do a lotta different things, and do 'em right," as their line of best-option accessories continues to grow and each item comprises a mature design that shows the benefit of user input coupled to genuine materials and manufacturing expertise.

Dry-Cell stands for dry cell map and document, and comprises a rugged foot-square "soft-sided storage system." We'd call it a premium map case, plus. The outer carrier is made from a Dupont nylon fabric, with one side a window of tough, optical-grade (double-polished) PVC film. It features a mil-spec brass drain grommet, jingle-free YKK zipper and double-stitched UV- and abrasion-resistant polypro binding. There is a handy mil-spec nylon roll-up strap, with a quick-release buckle. Inside are two replaceable Splash Caddy waterproof liners. Readers may remember these from when they were reviewed a couple years ago: They are waterproof to 200 feet, with a patented closure. They are to household zip-closed plastic bags as a M249 SAW is to a Chauchaut.

Because of the large dimension and the flexible materials, either large or small items can be accommodated: maps and documents, personal electronics, photo gear, dry skivvies, clipboards, small weapons, instruments, EOD items, ammo — you name it. This is basic gear, with uncountable uses. We recommend it to keep your latest copy of SOF dry.

Ask for these items at your PX/BX or quality outdoor store. For the dealer nearest you contact: Best Made Designs, Dept. SOE, 1601 W. 15th St., Monahans, TX 79756; phone: 866-SPEC-OPS. ☒



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had been led into a trap, they cried. Meanwhile, there was nobody at Cockerill who wasn't smiling, though details as to how the itinerary and dates had been leaked, or, for that matter, why the Hind should have been on the Makeni road specifically at that time, were never explained.

Looking back, Nellis isn't certain that the mission was as much of a success as some had made it.

On the positive side, he reckons that both the government and the army were presented with a morale booster that kept otherwise sagging spirits high for weeks. Customarily, the newspapers were full of it, though without the machinations.

The Chinooks were apparently more than a match for anything that the rebels could throw at them. They performed splendidly, taking out all the hostages without loss.

As more innuendo emerged, events surrounding UNAMSIL's — and, in particular, Garba's — duplicity, a growing and visible rift between the Nigerian and Indian factions in West Africa became apparent. None of it was a credit to either party. Ultimately it led to New Delhi pulling its troops out of UNAMSIL altogether, followed by Jordan, depleting the total force strength by about a quarter.

Cumulatively, these events, in turn, obliged Britain to take on a more obtrusive role. By the end of the year — in spite of protests from the Tory opposition — the British government had a Royal Navy and Royal Marine strike force stationed semipermanently off West Africa. Also, the Nigerian Army in Sierra Leone — and, to some extent, abroad — was forced to temper its dealings with the RUF. Had it gone on, Kabbah's government would have been pushed further into isolation.

Amateurs, Amateurs

The ongoing war — with the rebel atrocities that kept coming in — wouldn't allow the impasse to go on indefinitely. Nellis's ambush might have scored points, but the retaliating rebels intensified their barbarism in just about all the villages in the area, though fortunately most of the civil

population had fled.

Six weeks after the incident, the UN asked Nellis to take the Hind and attack a village in the east of the country. Under "Operation Kukri," it had come under fairly heavy Indian Air Force Mi-24 fire in the rescue of a batch of UN soldiers being held hostage. Their gunships razed the place. Nellis was told that there were still some rebel targets intact, including a radio center.

"The idea was that I should hit the village the day afterwards. Out of the blue, Garba, all charm and snake oil, gives me clearance to eliminate all the infrastructures that remained and, as he said, I should kill anyone found there. So it starts to smell to me like fish. It was so typical of the Nigerian, devious to the end," commented Nellis.

What he really wanted was to defer blame onto the Air Wing for the destruction that had taken place with

the Indian gunships.

"The intent, obviously, was to make me carry the can so that he could say to the rebels afterwards that his people had never been involved," said the South African. But he wasn't prepared to become a scapegoat for any UN excesses.

It would have been quite easy had he gone ahead, he explained. In the remote back and beyond of Darkest Africa, he elaborated, a gunship is a gunship, whatever color its painted, white or camouflage. Had I done the job, reports would have come in from the tribespeople about a helicopter "killing people indiscriminately." Obviously, the folk at the UN HQ in Freetown would have pointed fingers at Nellis. They would be in the clear because the UN operation had taken place days before.

Instead, Nellis reported to Garba that his aircraft weren't serviceable and it wasn't possible to carry out any strikes for a day or two. He's convinced that had he gone ahead, pressure would have been placed on Kabbah's government to restrict all operational flights involving the Hinds. He might even have been chucked out of the country.

Shortly before, there was also the ferry incident at Manowa Junction. Defense Headquarters had received information that the RUF were rebuilding several boats order to transport cap-

tured ECOMOG and UN vehicles and equipment to Liberia. After the attack, the rebels refused to continue any negotiations with Jetley's staff for the release of the Indian troops being held in Kailahun, the small town near the Guinea frontier, which was also the nerve center of rebel communications.

Chopperjocks To The Rescue

About now, the hostage situation in Kailahun had become desperate. A couple of hundred Indian and other nationals — all of them serving UN personnel — were being kept prisoner by the rebels. They had minimal food and no medical supplies worth mentioning, which meant that quite a few had gone down with malaria. There were no deaths yet, but that was only a question of time. Coupled to this, was the refusal by the RUF to allow UN resupply airlifts to the town.

For once, Jetley had been pushed into a position that was untenable and he had no option but to do something. It was an operation that also involved the Royal Air Force.

The rescue of more than 200 members of a United Nations peacekeeping mission from an isolated corner of Sierra Leone in August 2000, underscored the pre-eminence of the role of the helicopter gunship in this war.

Apart from the British Chinooks, all three IAF Force Mi-24 attack choppers took part. They went in fast and low and destroyed just about everything in sight. The trouble was, what should have been a joint effort was handled piecemeal.

One of the officers involved in the strike provided detail. "With Operation Kukri, you need to remember that it was largely Indians rescuing Indians. There was little involvement of other forces. The British supplied their Chinooks for the rescue of MILOBS (military observers) and then only because there was a British officer being held. Earlier the SAS had gone into the area on several reconnaissance missions."

In fact, the op was supposed to be a coordinated affair with the RAF and Indian Air Force helicopters going in together to maintain the element of surprise. However, there was quite a thick mist early that morning and once more Jetley did his thing. He insisted on a delay of a few hours to allow for visibility to improve. The British refused to wait and went in anyway.

"The Indian Hinds followed hours later, so most of the RUF had already fled the area. In general, the perception is that Op Kukri didn't have too much of an effect because there was no follow-up

and no attempt to dominate the ground ... the rebels reoccupied their original areas again not long afterwards," the source disclosed

The Chinooks were apparently more than a match for anything that the rebels could throw at them. They performed splendidly, taking out all the hostages without loss.

There were magnificent action photos taken by a freelancer at the time and it showed these graceful giants hovering feet above the jungle while putting down suppressing fire and firing off strings of anti-missile flares. It was an impressive display: the twin-rotor Helios, mounting two six-barrel Gatlings and a GPMG on lowered ramps to the rear. Since all the guns were 7.62mm NATO-caliber, the firepower must have been awesome.

A "Reward" Posting?

That it happened at all was remarkable. Until then, the Indian General had been atypically Indian in his behavior.

Kashmir had proved long ago that the Indian Army could fight, and fight well, if it had to. Among Jetley's units in West Africa were two battalions that had been on active service there. They had apparently accounted themselves well against Pakistani-supported *Hizbollah* guerrillas in the mountainous enclave.

During my interview with General Jetley, he had explained in great detail that bringing them to Africa had been "something of a reward" for time spent in Kashmir. He was dead serious. While serving on the Indian subcontinent, he explained, they were paid a fraction of what they got wearing blue, which was a basic of roughly \$1,000 a month.

"Money talks the same language wherever you are," said this effete little man who had a mental sail so rigged as to be swelled by the slightest puffery.

Perhaps it was the heat, but almost from the start, Jetley had been reluctant to use any of his forces offensively unless they were under direct attack. He had never deployed his Hinds before, arguing that if he did, then all the aircraft in the UN's distinctive white UN livery would come under fire when they operated anywhere beyond Freetown. In theory, he was right, but as someone asked, if that was his reasoning, what the hell was he doing in Sierra Leone?

Yet, in Sierra Leone, Jetley was in command of the biggest military force in an African region — twice the size of Europe — and he was doing exactly nothing with it. Obviously the British must have leaned on him because his lack of

action in the face of some fairly decisive moves by the rebels was starting to look bad, even with of his people in New York.

What was starting to emerge was that the man was incapable of doing his job. Not only was he — as overall commander — ineffectual, his subordinates were unable to decide on even the most fundamental issues. At that stage, he had 13,000 troops from 21 nations to help him.

His effort at Kailahun did pay one dividend. With the SAS doing all the behind-the-scenes work and British Chinooks at the van — the effect on RUF morale after the attack was immediate. There were rebel desertions everywhere.

Follow The Dollar

Asked about the UN fracas afterwards, a senior UN official in Freetown — a Canadian civilian who asked not to be named, explained it this way. "The reason for the squabble," he said, "involved money, and of course, there were the diamonds.

"In Sierra Leone, the Nigerians would like nothing better than to take over the peacekeeping role, not just in part, but *in toto*." If Lagos was running the show, he suggested, then they could ask Washington for help, as they did, subsequently, in training and equipment. But they couldn't do so while their senior officers were answerable to a *supremo* from another country.

More serious was the charge that the Nigerian officer corps running UNAMSIL had been justly accused of not actually wanting an end to the war. They preferred hostilities to go on, he reckoned, and for good reason. "There are already enough contacts with the RUF to ensure that a steady stream of diamonds comes their way.

"In fact," he declared, "just about everybody in Freetown is aware of what these avaricious mothers were doing."

Partly for lack of any direct evidence and also because the security of Freetown was in Nigerian hands, there weren't many people in Sierra Leone brave enough to accost their fellow West Africans. Even Jetley wouldn't tackle that bogey during his tenure.

True to form, when questioned about his accusations by the BBC a few days later in New Delhi, where he'd gone home on leave, the Indian General again put his foot in his mouth.

He said he couldn't remember making any accusations against his Nigerian colleagues!

Al J. Venter is SOF's Contributing Editor for Africa. ✘

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Brown told us. Because of the buildups along the border towns, remote areas west of Tucson are sparsely covered. With over 48 miles of border, Tucson Station sometimes has only five regular agents on shift at any one time. For smugglers, it's easy street.

While sensors keep track of the daily tonnage coming across, lack of manpower means that it's for the most part wide open. The task is made even harder by the presence of the Organ Pipe National Monument, where due to environmental regulations, no vehicular patrolling is allowed, not even by Federal agents. It's a dope-packer's dreamland and the locals apparently take full advantage of it. "About 80% of the people on the reservation smuggle aliens, dope or both. That's not bias, it's just a fact. Most everybody out there has been arrested at one time or another for smuggling, domestic abuse, assault, murder, that kind of stuff." Compounding the problem on the "Rez" are economic conditions that border on the Third World. Bearing all of this in mind, we saddled up and headed south.

Three hours from anywhere and before hitting our AO, we stopped off at the local patrol station to check in and get a SITREP. Looking like a modern-day Fort Apache with thick windowless walls topped with razor-wire, it had a besieged air about it. I couldn't help feeling as if we were about to be mortared, looking out at the hills beyond the dirt helipad with its tattered windsock. Inside, the team leaders had their sanity questioned by the head agent and we were warned about a canyon where mysterious figures with long rifles and night scopes had been sighted. "That's why we're here," was the reply.

Many miles farther on, we came into a collection of hardscrabble houses. It was our village and the end of the line. We could feel the eyes on us as we made a quick pass through "town" while groups of quiet sullen strays lined the roadside. Armed with M4s, Remington 870 "Lawman" 12s and enough flashbangs and sting-balls to start a war, SRT was ready to get down to business.

The area beyond the village was a rabbit warren of washed-out trails. Before nightfall we went in to *recce* the place, finding numerous spoor and scores of abandoned vehicles. One was a new Dodge pickup, mired to the roof in a streambed. "Looks like he had some

piss-poor intel on that wash," our guide commented. Farther down, along the cow fence, we started hitting foot-trails running in every direction. Plotting the fresh ones with a GPS we earmarked them for further attention.

At the same time, we stationed an FO equipped with a thermal scope on one of the hills. As the sun started to dip below the ridgeline, the first contacts started popping. The village got very quiet and a few cars timidly approached the line from the south, probing here and there for signs of immigration agents, or "migra," in border slang. As darkness came over the valley, they made their move.

Riding in a big, white BP Expedition with Team Leader Chris J. and his sidekick Dave W., we stationed ourselves a couple of miles from the village to hit the cars as they dashed north and made for the highway. The drill was simple. Drop off the spike group (Chris and I) on the road while the intercept unit (Dave and Angelica) lights up vehicles that have gone past. Smugglers usually pull a U-turn and run south when the flashers go on and that sends them back over our waiting spike strip. Doing it like that prevents embarrassing incidents as regular folks don't run towards Mexico when hailed by the Border Patrol.

Squatting in the brush, Chris and I didn't have to wait long. Dave radioed in that he had a suspicious Celica headed north. As they passed us we scurried out to the roadside to set up our strip, but the car full of illegals pulled over and came back peacefully. No spikes tonight. They parked at our stop point and waited for the detention van to come. Meanwhile, Dave and Angelica went south again to pick up more traffic.

While Chris, the aliens and I waited, the FO spotted nine vehicles headed across the line, straight at Dave and Angelica. As the convoy charged north, Dave flipped on the flashers and moved in for the bust. Seeing the big white SUV bearing down on them, the smugglers spun their jalopies into expert 180s and headed south. Before you could say "Camel Trophy," the whole thing degenerated into a free-for-all through the scrub as they barreled back towards Mexico. Closely pursuing a Jeep Cherokee, the Expedition beat out the rest of the pack to the line. Moments later the others came on like a herd of stampeding ponies, their human cargo screaming in terror. Scattering to both sides, they fled headlong into Mexico.

The last smuggler, with an outrageous number of people packed into a

Chevette, came bearing down on the Expedition as if to ram. No doubt addled by copious amounts of marijuana and alcohol, he and his screaming cargo veered off at the last moment. Loosing control, they jumped across a wash and crashed airborne through the fence, almost rolling over in the process. Later that night, it was not hard to imagine them in a village cantina, slamming back *cervezas* and recounting their brush with the gringo migra in the big white truck.

We were told this kind of vehicular problem is a nightly occurrence and while these smugglers got lucky, many times their reckless driving leads to fatal consequences. We had been shown photos at Tucson HQ of one smuggler who panicked at the sight of a BP truck and had tore away at high speed. He hadn't gone far when he flipped it upside down into a wash at full-flood. Seven people drowned, trapped inside the smashed vehicle. But like the saying goes, we had heard about it but hadn't seen it until we returned to the field two days later.

Crash And Burn

Early on the evening of our return, what should have been a routine "Stop, please go back," turned into a major smash up when a Coyote decided to run for it. Despite not being pursued by agents in any way, he chose to punch it and took off like a bat out of hell. Riding with Dan K., a former 101st trooper, we were a little taken aback and radioed uniformed units to intercept up by the highway. We continued north a short way and arrived on scene to find the car rolling airborne after losing it in a turn. Thinking it was dopers, we pulled up and approached with guns drawn. Instead of bales of dope, however, we found aliens scattered across the desert and crawling from the wreckage. We performed first aid while waiting for help, but being in the middle of nowhere, it took more than an hour for the rural volunteer fire & rescue squad to appear. By the time it was over, four hours later, the coyote driver was paralyzed, the FD had to cut the car apart and a total of three victims were air evacuated to Tucson hospitals. The cost of five workers and one "coyote" to the local taxpayer? \$25,000 just to clear the accident scene.

While the road wreck pretty much shut things down on that stretch for the night, it picked right back up again and ran constant for a week. Something, however, was amiss. Whereas before this had been a prime dope area, traffic of that nature suddenly dried up within two days of SRT's arrival. Plenty of alien traffic kept coming up the valley, but the

dopers were no where to be found.

By the time we returned a week later, with long-time SOFer Joe Torre, the reasons were becoming clear. Under current INS policy, illegal entrants are usually sent back to Mexico within a few hours. Like human motion detectors, they trip-off any BP presence and set the radio net crackling with requests for transport which the drug cartels monitor with the best scanners money can buy. They will also debrief anyone returning that night through a Port of Entry. In this particular area, the cartels were getting the kind of news they didn't want to hear. The detainees wouldn't be reporting the usual, straight-leg Border Patrol agents but instead would come back with tales of shadowy figures in OD with mean-looking guns. Clue number one that SRT was in town.

They were also pulling in their local contacts as well and in a remote village where the authorities are a rarity, the new guys would not have gone unnoticed. In fact, within hours of our arrival on the first night, the lone telephone wire leading to the village was singing up a storm, easily heard in the stillness of the desert night.

Also, early in the operation SRT began scanning the opposition's radio nets. With native speakers listening in, it became apparent that a sizable number of scouts had taken up residence in the hills north of the U.S. line. In short order the scout's code words and nicknames had been pegged and it became apparent that every move the team made was being carefully monitored. With smuggler OPs keeping tabs on the valley, groups were being routed around the flanks and through passes to the west. It was time to change tactics.

Better Run Through The Jungle

Knowing that smugglers can easily afford standard night vision, as well as scanners and radios, the team went into light-infantry mode. Vehicles are easy to spot with NODS from high on the hills, but dirt bikes running black and legs hotfooting it through the scrub are a different matter. In short order, the team started cutting sign on groups as large as 50 on the side trails and finding numerous lay-up areas. "We cut a group that came within 100 yards of our camp the other night and we've found lots of load out points further north where they're coming in over the passes," relief team leader Eric Z told us when we returned.

"The minute they figured out it was SRT in here, they pulled the plug on the dope," he continued, "but we're still getting lots of alien groups trying the flanks

and I've got two guys further out cutting one trail I know for sure is dopers." What was plaguing the team now was manpower. With the higher-ups in Washington playing the deterrence game in urban areas, remote sectors take a back seat. In the western desert there's plenty of traffic and miles of country, but precious few special operators to go around. With limited options and a mandate to close the main route, we were stuck guarding the road.

"The only vehicle they haven't made is the pickup, so we'll do a covert insert down by the line and turn back as much as we can from there," Eric explained as we saddled up at the dusty base camp. "With two of the guys running down that dope trail, I'm too shorthanded to do much more than that. We'll terrorize them on foot while the bikes mix it up with anybody who gets past us." Soon after we were prone in the bed of the pickup and headed back south through the village.

Just beyond the last junkyard that passed for a house, we came head-on into a blue Ford Ranger coming north. To shouts of "Parate! Migra!" and looking down the business end of an M4, the driver crunched to a startled halt. A quick check pulled up Arizona tags that had died back in '98 while the two occupants produced some cock and bull story about going to see their uncle. One of them was a surly, teenaged American who looked like he had stepped out of a Gangsta Rap video. Being clean for now, he was allowed to proceed on foot under extreme suspicion. "Little Chollo prick," Eric spat as we remounted. "He's probably scouting this route for some gang-bangers out of Phoenix. Down here, everybody's mixed up in it."

Despite our cover being partially blown, we proceeded with the plan and bailed out on the fly into a thicket behind a flood control berm. A quick recce of the area turned up a pile of discarded burlap sacks, used at some point to pack in a load of marijuana. "Damn, they've been pretty brazen down here, loading out this close to the line," Eric commented as we moved deeper into the brush to lay up and wait. Despite being the witching hour, things were strangely quiet. We could see plenty of headlights down south and chased a couple of false starts, but no one seemed interested in making a run for it. We settled in to an LP/OP to wait for the bikes who had been scouting down on the line.

A short while later, 101st Dan and Sean Y., an ex-Ranger now swinging a ruck with SRT, rolled in. "Guess who we just had a little chat with?" Sean asked.

"Federales, and they were all kinds of interested in who we were and what we were up to." The mystery was beginning to clear up. Dan chimed in to report that not only were the vaunted National Police down on the fence, but the Mexican Army was prowling around in the wings as well. That explained why the guy in the Ranger had almost pleaded not to be sent back south and into their tender embrace. For him, it would be good-bye truck, hello boot in the ass.

"They're wearing tennis shoes and being a little too friendly," Sean said. He went on to explain that the sneakers make their sign blend in with the rest of the alien traffic when they're scouting routes for smugglers. During our previous visits, we had been told that it was a common tactic for the Army and Federales to clear out an area and secure it when a load was headed up country. Aliens had reported that they carried out their mission with extreme prejudice and when they were around, everyone laid very very low. We knew that the usual bum rush of aliens was off as we moved back to a more central position at the road.

With no more than four agents able to work the valley, we sat tight and continued to observe. No one tried to cross by car, except for an old man and his ancient wife. Thinking they were our smugglers, we initiated contact and scared the bejesus out of them before sending them south with many apologies. After that, we watched and waited. It was about all we could do. Meanwhile, as everyone knew, loads were on the move somewhere else.

The game on the border is an ever-shifting mix of tactics, routes and intel. Tonight, the smugglers would have to hump it a little farther before they hit the hardball. It takes longer and it's a pain in the ass, but going head-to-head with SRT is simply not an option.

Note: As this story went to press, lawyers for the Tohono O'odham reservation threatened legal action if SRT did not withdraw their encampment off reservation land. Seems that SRT was hitting the right group of people. As a result, agents have had to move their headquarters from the field to the town of Ajo, 50 miles away. As a result, agents must now "commute" to their deployment area, leaving the place basically open for business during shift changes. Vehicular-based dope traffic immediately picked up.

Jim Bartlett and Angelica Allini have covered armed conflicts in Bosnia, Croatia, Chechnya and Downtown U.S.A. ✕

Spy To Spy

Continued from page 73

still trying to locate patrol personnel, most of whom had long since left the Army, to interview them for details.

On my third trip, I was shown a photograph of the Cuban Lieutenant, Dusentes Caldez, whom I had befriended and protected as a POW back in 1975 when he was captured by UNITA during the battles at Benguela and Lobito. He is living in the interior of Cuba. If he is willing, I offered to meet him again on a subsequent trip, after all these years, to find out how his life progressed after he was exchanged for four South African POWs held by MPLA.

Because of U.S. relations with Cuba, my direct trips to Havana are the only opportunities to discuss case specifics with diplomatic and military personnel with access to appropriate files, or with the journalists, combat photographers, and field personnel who had access to Kayak, and perhaps American POWs held by the VC and North Vietnamese.

The setup slows progress, primarily because I lacked the means to fly to Cuba whenever I might like to hasten the case. Still, I established a foundation for trust and cooperation required to resolve the Bacon case, and POW questions, if they are ever to be resolved.

A new era of cooperation and political evolution in the U.S.-Cuban relationship may not be as far away as people think. I experienced things in Cuba indicating that the divide is not as great as some factions would have us believe or want it to be. Resolution of differences, ultimately, will not be as difficult as closing divisions with Russia, China, Vietnam and North Korea.

But it will take an effort. As Guillermo Cabrera, of the Jose Marti Press Institute, said at the opening of the 1998 War Correspondents meeting, "Those who have known war, must work for peace."

If that happens, George "Kayak" Bacon, will have had a hand in making peace, even from the grave.

SOF Correspondent Cmdr. Chip Beck, USNR (Ret.), is again on assignment in Cuba, seeking to obtain the final locator data that will allow him and a Cuban official to travel to their old stomping grounds in Angola for a gravesite search and excavation of Kayak's remains, if found. The outcome of this trip to Cuba, then hopefully to Angola, will be the topic of a subsequent SOF article. ✕

Water Wings

Continued from page 47

ern African campaigns which South Africans served in. Some of the group stayed on in South Africa and went on safaris in the Kruger Park or traveled to Capetown for some ranch culling (hunting), as did Sgt. H. "Ranger" Cole and myself.

During my previous stay I was privileged to meet a former 44th Brigade commander, Col. Jan Breytenbach, a consummate warrior and a true living legend in South Africa. This trip I was a guest at the Southern Africa SAS Reunion in Durban and had the privilege to meet Lt. Col. Ron Reid-Daly CLM, DMM, MBE, the founder of the Rhodesian Selous Scouts. Lieutenant Colonel Reid-Daly very graciously signed a copy of his book, *Pamwe Chete* (a revised and expanded edition of *Selous Scouts Top Secret War* available through Amazon.com) for me. We had an interesting time telling Bob MacKenzie stories.

I stayed on in South Africa for another week and cannot speak highly enough about the experience. South Africa is a diverse and exciting country. Its military is undoubtedly the finest on the African continent. And its paratroopers and special forces can rival elite units found anywhere in the world today. The people we met were friendly and charming. I was proud to represent *Soldier Of Fortune* and the American Airborne Association. I'm looking forward to the next annual water-jump refresher and another military parachute jump with the paratroopers of the 44th Parachute Brigade along with many of my friends from LAARSA, where the wives and kids stock the coolers, stoke the barbecues, and put out the lawnchairs. Now that's my kind of airborne training. Hooah!

The author would like to thank all the participants of Operation Zulu Dawn 1998 and 1999, LAARSA, and the men and officers of the 44th Parachute Brigade for a successful military jump experience. Readers interested in participating in foreign jump tours and/or joining the American Airborne Association can contact Rob at: P. O. Box 1573, Olean, NY 14760; or e-mail: robkrott@hotmail.com.

Senior Foreign Correspondent Rob Krott has led 14 foreign jump tours and has earned the parachute badges of 10 foreign countries. ✕

Tomorrow's Army

Continued from page 57

frightening to see in action. Generals have found that combining infantry and tanks at the platoon level creates a much more deadly and effective force. Add indirect capabilities and close air support to the same platoon and the combined effect is much greater. This is how the Army trains and it is how the Army fights.

What we have not done effectively, is apply the same concept on a much larger and interservice level. The Air Force fights their war, the Navy theirs, and so on. There are those who would argue, that America already has a "911 Force." It is called the U.S. Marines. These missions Shinseki is organizing for should perhaps be the missions given to the Marines. Leave the other missions to the Army. And what roles do the Navy and Air Force play?

With today's limited budgets — pilots not flying, ships not sailing — to be left out of a conflict is the same as a pay-cut. Many chiefs of staff act as if their job is to ensure the survival of their branch. The name of the game is turf protection, not force projection. And it's guaranteed that if Shinseki's plan appears headed for acceptance and success, his biggest obstacles may also wear four stars, only on different colored uniforms.

Where in the past, the military has only paid the modicum of lip service to the concept of change, make no mistake, this one is for real. There are financial hurdles to be overcome, traditions to be broken, rivalries to quell, and egos to be massaged. But the transformation has started. If Shinseki lays the groundwork correctly, it will also survive him — and that is important; to see this halfway through would be disastrous.

But there is the chance that Shinseki is on to something. Just as the agile Roman Legions were able to outmaneuver and defeat the enormous heavily armed Macedonian Phalanx 2,200 years ago and dominate world history through the deployment of efficient autonomous military organizations, perhaps the U.S. military is facing the same challenge. And in order for the Army to survive and its reputation be restored, it may need agility to outmaneuver the enormous, heavily armed Phalanx lurking in Congress and the Pentagon. Besides, I doubt Shinseki wants to be remembered only for the "black beret" thing. ✕

I Was There

Continued from page 18

said, but the gesturing to the camera and then to their rifles left little doubt. He had dropped the camera to his side, but I'm sure it was still rolling. Only about 15 seconds had elapsed so far, and I suddenly remembered I was without my interpreter.

"Marin!" I screamed up the hill. He was only a few hundred meters, so came running with the (American) combat camera crew — a three-man team armed with video and digital cameras to record events as they occur. The camera guys set up about 50 meters away, and started recording. Marin jumped into the scuffle with me. Now one of the MUPs had hold of the reporter's camera, the others continued to shout and point with their rifles, but the reporter would not let go.

"I'm a reporter! You can't do this! I have the credentials to be here!" He yelled in English.

"Marin, translate that," I said.

"I know this guy, he can fuckin' speak it," Marin muttered to me before translating. One of the MUPs said something back.

"He says he no hurt him, just want the camera."

The reporter had been wrestled to the ground, but he still wouldn't let go of that damn camera. "Hey, aren't you gonna do something? Why are you just standing there?" he screamed at me from the ground.

Once again, I did the math: 10 AKs versus one M203 and now the three M-9 pistols the combat camera guys carried. With my damn combat camera behind me with the damn video rolling, and my helmet off, some damn general's going to watch this and the first thing he'll see is not the American reporter being thrown to the ground; not the illegal weapons; not the illegal arrests. He'll see me without my helmet on. Fucking command, always paranoid that someone will get hurt to the point of lunacy, I thought to myself. Some people just always have their priorities out of whack.

"Just give them the goddamn camera!" I yelled back at him, caring only that he got out of this in one piece. I was fairly certain they wouldn't hurt him with me there. After a few more moments of struggle, they finally got the camera, and let him go. I stepped in between him and the MUPs and began pushing him back towards the combat camera guys. He was yelling

something about "they can't do this, you can't let them take my camera." I was still doing the math, and telling him to shut the hell up about the camera, he could get a new one. We were under standing orders to protect foreign civilians, but there wasn't much I could do for the three Bosnians at that point, especially not the way the math continued to add up.

It was only about a minute into the event, but felt like an hour. The Major finally caught wind of what was going down and came bolting down the hill with the Russian captain and a few soldiers. Major Nash jogged up the senior MUP and tried to yank the AK from his hands, but the MUP shoved him away. The three Bosnians were bound and gagged by then, so the MUPs began to fall back down the hill they had come over. The Major grabbed Marin and started after them.

"Stay here and make sure none of those villagers follow!" he yelled to me. One of my guys had made it to the scene, so the two of us held off several angry villagers from pursuing.

The three men were released that night, mostly unharmed, and returned to the village, but not before the villagers had rioted and drove us away. They weren't too fond of the Russians, also mostly Orthodox Christian, so they blamed them for the whole mess. It was a long day.

A few days later, when I returned to the relative comfort and stability of my normal AO, my premonition about my helmet came to pass. The division PSYOP officer got his ass chewed by the division commander, and, as they say, the shit rolled down hill. The Brigade Commander referred to me as "a disgrace to the Army", something that, to this day, never ceases to piss me off. No matter what they say, I think I did the right thing. Under the rules of engagement I would have been justified in opening fire on the MUPs. Makes you wonder where everyone's head is when three civilians and an American reporter are roughed up, the peace accord was violated, and the biggest complaint is that I had my helmet off. I blame it on the then Commander-in-Chief. He's the one that actually ordered the Generals to "not get anyone killed over there", which in turn created the idiotic "Force Protection" rules like always being in full battle gear.

Staff Sergeant Colin Colwell, Team Chief, TPT 221, lives in Ohio. This is his first article for SOF. ✕

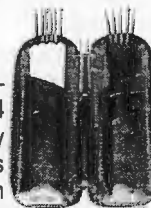
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6. At that debriefing did she claim to have given information on threats to blow up federal buildings in Tulsa and Oklahoma City?

7. Did she report to Angela Finley in late November/early December 1994 that Strassmeir said they should stop talking and start blowing-up [federal building]?

8. Was she polygraphed during her time as an informant?

9. Did ATF wire — for sound and pictures — her apartment in Tulsa?

10. After her debriefing at Oklahoma City was she sent back to Elohim City, about a week after the bombing, for two days?

After some give-and-take, including some discussion of the 17 January piece that *20/20* aired and whether Andy Strassmeir was ever a subject of investigation or a suspect in the OKBOMB case, Leesa Brown concluded her talk with Thrasher by saying, "This is not an official response, but we're not going to be able to deny it." She said she would have to get back to us.

My contemporaneous notes show that at 3:36 pm (local, Tulsa time), Thrasher returned Brown's page, using a pay phone in a west Tulsa barbecue joint.

Brown did not beat around the bush. After asking Thrasher if our piece would air that night, she said, "your information is accurate."

We had our confirmation! Carol Howe's information had now been officially blessed by the U.S. Department of Justice. Thrasher called New York to report to Jennings' producer that Leesa Brown had just confirmed that our facts were solid.

The production team went to the ABC affiliate in Tulsa to watch Jennings put our piece on the air.

At 5:30 p.m. Thrasher, the cameraman, the soundman and myself sat in the KTUL lobby watching the opening of Jennings' program. Three stories were promoted in his opening comment. First, the verdict in O.J. Simpson's civil court case that had been announced the night before in California. Second, the President's State of the Union speech, delivered Tuesday night. Third, an update on the hostage situation at the Japanese Embassy in Lima, Peru.

Neither Carol Howe nor the OKBOMB case was even mentioned.

At this point, Thrasher and I looked

at each other and realized that "shit had happened." Then the lobby telephone rang. It was a call from one of our ABC contacts in Washington. The Clinton Administration had succeeded — Jennings and his producers had spiked the Carol Howe piece.

What The Flack, Over?

We were dumbfounded. How could they spike this story? Only two hours earlier the official spokeswoman for the Justice Department had stated, on the record, that our "information is accurate."

Thrasher then related that the ATF lackeys had called ABC News, at the last minute, after the DOJ media rep had confirmed our information. The



Hours after the bombing, Timothy McVeigh was arrested, and thus far is the only one convicted for the OKC bombing.

ATF had claimed that Carol Howe's information was not true. For the liberal, nervous nellys in New York and Washington that populate the higher levels of ABC News, this ATF call must have been the escape hatch they had most likely been hoping for.

It was a longer than normal drive back to Oklahoma City that evening. Thrasher and I were getting angrier as each mile passed. To have this story cold, to have the information confirmed, on the record, by a government official, and to have it spiked by Jennings and his crew was damn near unbelievable, yet this was the sequence we had just witnessed firsthand.

Early the next morning Thrasher called my hotel room to relate the essence of a phone call that he and Isham had completed. ABC evening news now wanted us to add a couple interviews and feed the video to

Washington for editing. The expanded Carol Howe piece would run that day, Thursday evening.

From a well-placed ABC source Thrasher and I learned that the head flack at ATF, Pat Hinds, had overplayed his hand the previous day when he claimed that the only warnings [of threats of bombings against federal buildings in Oklahoma] Carol Howe had given the ATF were *after* the bombing. The ABC newscaster had replied to Hinds that ABC News had a "dated, sworn statement" by Howe that proved otherwise. And at this point, Hinds had "quit trying to use that line" with this particular journalist.

Hinds and his fellow federal *apparatchniks* had succeeded in delaying the Howe piece, but as of late Thursday morning it appeared that ABC news was ready to blow the roof off the government's most basic claim concerning the OKBOMB case.

Yet, after Wednesday's spiking Thrasher and I were not naive enough to think that getting the Carol Howe piece on air was a done deal. The word from ABC contacts in both New York City and in Washington, D.C. was that the federal flacks and White House weasels had mounted "an all-out assault on our story."

While the damage-control campaign intensified on the East Coast, in the nation's heartland the ABC field team did as instructed. We interviewed a survivor of the bombing (a federal employee, V.Z. Lawton) and an outspoken local critic (state representative Charles Key), and leased a satellite (at \$7,000 for one hour) to feed the video back to the ABC editing rooms.

I returned to the Thrasher's hotel room shortly after 4 p.m. with the acknowledgement from the ABC news editor in Washington that the video had arrived in fine form.

Things were looking good, or so I thought until Thrasher, who was on the telephone with some ABC office, gave me the thumbs-down sign. This was not the sign I was expecting.

As soon as he finished the call, Thrasher told me that Jennings and his producers had again killed the Carol Howe piece.

Uncomfortable Truths

After a short swearing session, I cooled down enough to call Isham to inquire what had happened this time. His response was that neither he, nor Jennings, nor the executive producer for evening news, were "comfortable"

with the information in the Carol Howe piece. When I pushed for him to identify specific information with which the New York City team was not comfortable, he refused. When I asked why they were uncomfortable with information confirmed on the record by the appropriate official of the Justice Department, he refused to give a direct answer.

Trying to figure out later what had happened was like trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle that has lost some pieces. We never found all the pieces but we got enough to allow us to identify the picture.

The entire executive branch coterie involved in the OKBOMB case had panicked over what proved later to have been an unfounded rumor that Carol Howe was to give an imminent press conference in Denver.

The Clinton White House faced what has to be seen in hindsight as its most serious domestic political threat until another rich young woman named Monica exploded onto the front pages almost exactly one year later.

The reaction of Reno's lackeys to the rumored press conference was indeed bizarre. Larry Mackey (who later became lead prosecutor in Terry Nichols' trial) called Stephen Jones to plead that Jones and the Department of Justice prosecution task force issue a joint press release "that there was no prior knowledge on the part of any U.S. Government agency" relative to the OKBOMB case. Mackey pleaded with Jones that the defense attorney agree to sign a statement in which both prosecution and defense teams denounced the expected claim of Carol Howe "that the government, thanks to her, had prior knowledge of the bombing."

Mackey went on to say that if it came out that the federal government and the ATF had prior knowledge [of threats to blow up federal buildings in Tulsa or Oklahoma City], it would bring the country down! (Emphasis added.) Jones declined.

In his book, *Others Unknown: The Oklahoma City Bombing Case and Conspiracy*, Jones described his reaction as having been "dumbfounded." After some discussion he replied to Mackey, "how could I possibly agree with your side when I don't know what information Carol Howe gave the government in the first place?"

Mackey then responded, "The FBI will be in your office in two hours. They'll have all her statements. You can see for yourself."

The degree of panic among the federal agencies was now fully exposed. Records whose very existence had been actively (and perhaps illegally) concealed for nearly two years were now miraculously and immediately available to McVeigh's lead defense attorney!

Although Jones was only allowed to read what is now known to have been a heavily sanitized form of Howe's file, he saw enough to understand the Clintonistas' panic.

Carol Howe did not claim to have provided precise *tactical threat warning* to her ATF handlers (whose reports had been closely monitored at ATF HQ in Washington) that the Murrah Building was going to be bombed at 9:02 a.m. on 19 April 1995. The clearly



*Defense attorney Stephen Jones and his wife leave the Federal Court House in Denver at a noon recess during the August 1999 trial of Timothy McVeigh. Jones subsequently published a book *Others Unknown: The Oklahoma City Bombing Case and Conspiracy*, which noted the many loose ends in the investigation of the case.*

censored file did show that her *strategic threat warning* certainly provided the post-bombing investigators what should have been their most important lead to apprehending those involved in killing 168 Americans.

But rather than following this lead, Reno's Justice Department and the Freeh's FBI actively intervened to shut down any investigative efforts that tried to exploit Howe's information.

Once the bomb had shattered the peaceful Oklahoma morning, both the White House and federal law enforce-

ment evinced no interest in a full and honest investigation. Their shared objective was to deflect attention from the most obvious question, "How did this happen?" The operative mode was damage-control, spin and outright lies. That mode continues to this day.

After Thrasher finished a few phone calls he related what he had learned of the details of this second spiking of the Howe story by Peter Jennings and his crew.

The feds had put on a full-court press. Calls had come into all levels of ABC News management from the Justice Department, the FBI, the ATF, and the White House. The message pressed on the ABC news executives was very simple — airing the Carol Howe story could bring the country down (at least the Clinton Administration), and lead to the abolishment of the ATF.

After I had heard Thrasher's description of the intense pressures being applied to ABC News, I could see how the liberal-leaning executives rationalized their gutless roll-over. If the ATF was abolished as a result of ABC's airing the Carol Howe story, then they would be responsible for the inevitable result of this abolishment — machine guns on every street corner!

The Warning Unheeded

And just what was the explosive revelation that Reno and Freeh so feared? Here are the two key paragraphs from my notes on the script:

Howe told ABC News that in late '94 at a meeting in Elohim City, a participant, who has since fled to Germany, urged blowing up federal buildings instead of just talking about it. She says she passed this on to her ATF handler. The Murrah Building was blown up four months later.

A spokesperson for the Justice Department late today confirmed to ABC News that she gave them information about people who had discussed blowing up the building and they sent her back under cover to get more information, which they say led nowhere.

The Clintonistas had dodged this ABC "bullet" twice, but they were not to find Tom Brokaw and NBC the pushovers that Peter Jennings and cronies had proven to be, at least on this story.

On the next evening, Friday, 7 February, Mike Boettcher's piece ran on

the NBC Nightly News as one of its "In Depth" featured stories.

Brokaw set the piece with these introductory questions:

"Did federal officials have any sort of advance knowledge, a warning, that someone might be plotting to blow up the federal building in Oklahoma City? NBC News has learned an undercover informer for the FBI, a woman who was part of a white supremacist group, provided information about bomb threats, but was it enough to prevent this tragedy?"

On-air reporter Mike Boettcher first set the backgrounds of Carol Howe and Elohim City, and then got to the nub of the story:

"Starting in June of 1994, Howe began telling the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and later the FBI, that Dennis Mahon, leader in the neo-Nazi movement, often spoke with others at the compound about building bombs and often about specific targets. Two days after the Oklahoma City bombing, according to FBI documents, Howe reported that Mahon had talked of "targeting federal installations for destruction through bombings, such as the IRS building, the Tulsa federal building, and the Oklahoma City federal building.

"Federal officials say these specific threats were never relayed to them before the bombing on April 19th, and Dennis Mahon, who now lives in Tulsa, denies any connection to any threats or bombings."

Boettcher then introduced the viewing audience to Andy "The German" Strassmeir and explained that Carol Howe,

"gave the government information before the bombing on alleged threats by others in Elohim city, including this man, Andres Strassmeier(sic). According to federal documents, Strassmeier was the military training officer for Mahon's organization, called the White Aryan Resistance. The FBI summary of informant Carol Howe's report states, "Strassmeier has talked frequently about direct action against the US government. He is trained in weaponry and has discussed assassination, bombings, and mass shootings. Strassmeier and Mahon have taken three trips to



Toby Thompson, who lost a brother in the OKC bombing, presents President Clinton with a sapling from an elm tree planted at memorial site of the destroyed Murrah Building.

Oklahoma City."

Hide This

NBC News had now put into public play the facts that prove the lie to claims by federal law enforcement agencies that they had not received any warning, of any type, relative to the bombing in Oklahoma City.

In ending his piece, Boettcher rightly drew the distinction between strategic and tactical warning.

"While Carol Howe reported on white supremacists, their talk about bombings and anti-government threats, there is no evidence that she reported a specific threat to the Murrah Federal Building before the bombing."

With NBC News broadcasting this kind of explosive information, one might question why the story died a quiet death, with almost no follow-up. In subsequent conversation, an NBC employee who was intimately involved in the matter said that as a result of this story, NBC news took Boettcher off the OKBOMB story.

And at least one senior member of the NBC news field team that produced the Carol Howe piece had not been convinced the story would see the light of day until it had actually run.

Recall Assistant U.S. Attorney Joe Hartzler's adamant and absolute statement of 14 January 1995, quoted above, that there was "no evidence of any prior warning ... of any terrorist

threat to Oklahoma City," and that he said this to a network TV news producer to influence a soon-to-be-aired story.

A little more than three months later, in the middle of the McVeigh trial in Denver, a preliminary hearing on charges against Carol Howe took place in the Tulsa Federal Courthouse. ATF Special Agent Angela Finley [then Graham] testified, under oath and under the threat of perjury.

Howe's attorney, Clark Brewster questioned Finley, "And Ms. Howe told you about Mr. Strassmeir's threats to blow up Federal buildings, didn't she?"

Graham replied, "In general, yes."

Brewster followed up, "And that was before the Oklahoma City bombing?"

Graham responded, "Yes."

So, who are we to believe — the Assistant U.S. Attorney eager to convey his sincerity (but on a damage-control mission), or a reluctant Special Agent of the ATF (testifying under the penalty of perjury)?

Carol Howe was found not guilty by unanimous vote of the Tulsa federal jury. She sold her story to a major Hollywood movie company and lives under a new identity. ABC News magazine *Prime Time Live* did a major piece about Howe's amazing story on 10 December 1997. In a promotional statement, *Prime Time Live* gave the federal government's latest response to ABC News queries about Howe claims: "The government now calls the bomb threats that Howe reported, 'general militia rhetoric.'" ❧

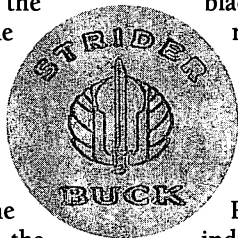
Battle Blades

Continued from page 25

the cost fall where it may. ATS 34 and BG42 are premium steels used by many, if not most, custom knifemakers who employ the stock removal technique of knifemaking. The heart and soul of any knife is its blade, and Buck went the extra mile in their choice of blade material.

The Strider is a liner-lock design. Simple in concept, but a little tricky to mass produce, the liner-lock is extremely strong. In the Strider it is doubly so, because the liners and the resulting lock are made from titanium. Buck didn't choose titanium for the weight savings; titanium was selected for the added strength it provides in the critical area of the locking mechanism. Titanium is costly and difficult to machine, but is yet another example of premium materials used where strength is a necessity. While the liners form the backbone of the handle, the outer scales which provide the gripping surface are made from G-10. First used by custom knifemakers, G-10 is impervious to nearly everything short of a direct hit from an armor piercing round. G-10 is tough, doesn't chip, shrink, or swell, and is unaffected by extremes of temperature, rot, or mildew. The friction washers that are a necessary component of this type of folder and are installed between the blade and handle liners are made of bronze. Some makers and manufacturers use delrin or nylon which can be affected by some solvents or extremes of temperature. With a handle made of titanium and G-10 and friction washers made of bronze, the Strider can function unaffected and unprotected in any environment on Earth.

The Strider is built primarily as a right-handed knife. The blade opens by means of a conventional stud placed on the right side of the blade just forward of the pivot pin. The liner lock is placed on the left handle liner where it is most conveniently released by lateral pressure from the right thumb. However, the back of the blade is serrated as far forward as the placement of the opening stud, and the blade can also be opened by thumb pressure on the back of the blade with either hand. The handle is scalloped on either side of the liner lock release which also allows either-handed access to the liner lock release. This is one knife that is easy to use with either hand and easily meets our criteria of



ambidextrous deployment.

The Strider comes equipped with both a belt-clip and lanyard hole, thus giving its user a large number of carrying options. The G-10 handle scales are dull black in color, and the blade and major metal parts are given a subdued nonreflective gray finish. The torx head screws holding everything together have a black anodized finish. The Strider also easily meets our criteria of being nonreflective.

The Strider is generally well-thought-out and very well-executed. Our samples both have excellent grinding and symmetry on the blades and have been skillfully fitted and assembled. And both blades were sharp, out of the box. Really sharp. The ATS34 blade, in particular, was like a razor. Which brings us to the extra mile Buck walked when they selected the steel for the Strider. Buck not only walked the extra mile, they went a step farther. Rather than rely on standard industry recommendations for

heat treatment of these blades, Buck retained the services of Paul Bos to establish the specifications and oversee the heat treatment set up for the Strider. For the uninformed, Paul Bos has been the overwhelming choice for the custom knifemaking establishment — at least the stock removal segment — for the heat treatment of the high-end, high-dollar custom knives. The man is a specialist, and he is very good at what he does. Most companies have pride in what they do, and most knife companies would have felt that their employees and facilities could have handled the heat treatment of the ATS34 Strider blades in house. Buck did not have to commission the knowledge of Paul Bos. But they did, and in doing so have put blades on the Strider fully as good as those of the custom knives carrying price tags of a thousand dollars or more. Maybe better. The ATS34 Strider on my desk is easily the most impressive blade made of this material that I have ever tested, and the blades of both knives carry the Paul Bos logo, as well as that of Strider and Buck.

Buck has raised the bar of quality in production folders with the Strider. There are folders that are prettier, some have more spit and polish, and some come in fancier autographed boxes. Few are as dedicated to their specific task, and none that I have seen are as easy to sharpen and cut as well as the Buck Strider. ✂

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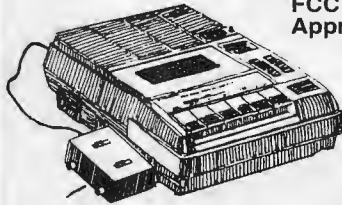
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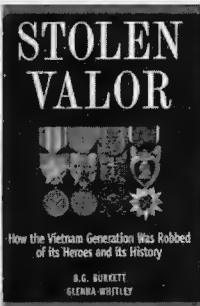
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

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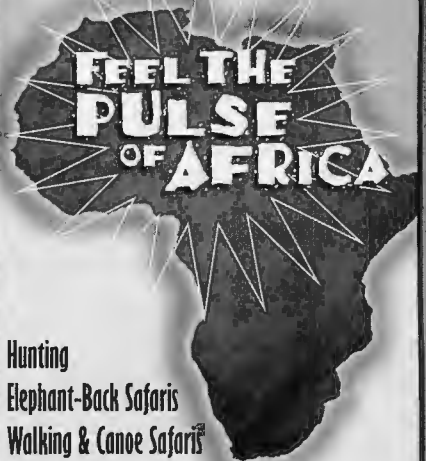
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Bring Down The Beast

Iraq, under the control of Saddam Hussein and his sinister, Mafia-like tribe, remains a clear and present danger to his citizens, neighbors and the world. He not only possesses weapons of mass destruction — WMD — he's used them in the past.

At the end of Desert Storm, when Stormin' Norman had a steel grip around the Bully of Baghdad's neck, the man couldn't wait to sign the peace accord. But since then, Saddam has continually broken his word and intrigued against those who defeated him — that's when he's not too busy committing genocide upon his own people or shooting at our aircraft.

President George W. Bush made the right move recently when he fired a few shots through Saddam's tent. They delivered a clear message: The USA's got a new high sheriff, and the Beast of Baghdad best stop the nonsense and abide by his promises or suffer the consequences.

Since Desert Storm wound down in 1991, U.S. policy toward Iraq has been weak-willed, confined to a low flame on the back burner. When Saddam fired heat-seeking missiles with explosive warheads at our fighter planes, Clinton had our pilots respond with nonexplosive concrete "bombs." Since 1 January alone, Saddam's made at least 65 attempts to shoot down our aircraft.

While we've been caught up in this no-win, lethal game of tit for tat, Saddam has rebuilt his military into a formidable force, refused to allow UN inspectors to eyeball what he's up to in his reopened WMD death factories and sponsored new international terrorist initiatives.

But in late February, Bush went back to gunpowder and steel and sent the right kind of long-overdue signal. Bullies understand that fiery stuff far better than a little hardened sand and cement.

The 24 strike fighter-bombers that closed down Saddam's main Command and Control radar sites and other military structures took out many assigned targets with military precision before returning unscathed to their bases. And now that Saddam is partially blinded, we should continue to keep him in the dark by attacking every air-defense facility



Col. David Hackworth (Ret.) also writes a syndicated weekly column titled "Defending America." "Hack" doesn't pull any punches and many liberal rags won't carry his writing. If your local paper falls into that category, call the editor and let him know you'd like to see "Defending America" on the Op-Ed page. It's syndicated by King Features, 235 E. 45th St., New York, NY 10017.

that "paints" American and British aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones.

Secretary of State Colin Powell's recent trip to the Persian Gulf was designed to stitch together a badly frayed coalition that used to be a mighty force when Powell ran the '91 war against Iraq. Since then, Saddam's been doing a brisk business with most of the states who fought against him during Desert Storm. His machinations and manipulations have made a joke of the Gulf War sanctions: He sells oil on the sly by the tankerful, and planes are flying in and out of Baghdad as if it were JFK. Under Clinton, slowly, with care and cunning, Saddam has morphed into the true winner of Desert Storm.

The air patrols over Iraq are wearing out our flying machines and taking their toll on our aircrews' morale.

If Powell's diplomacy fails and Saddam neither allows the UN inspections, as per the peace accord, nor honors his other agreements; then we should stop pussyfooting around while Iraq daily becomes stronger, and

employ the full military hammer.

If we have to go for mini-Desert Storm II, we must first carry on with the airstrikes.

Next we should move the U.S. Army's V Corps with its tank-heavy divisions from Germany to Iraq's northern border and III Corps with its armored divisions from the States to Kuwait. Once air power has done its job and all's in place, the two mighty corps can jump off in a giant iron pincer and meet in Baghdad.

It's only fitting that Dubya should order Dick Cheney and Colin Powell to finish the ugly business that began on their and Poppy's watch.

<http://www.hackworth.com> is the address of David Hackworth's home page.

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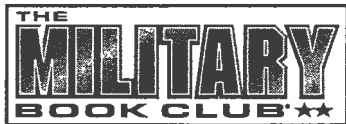


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22-jewel precision SWISS ETA 251.272 quartz movement. Chronograph: 1/10th second, 60 seconds, 30 minutes. Case in black PVD solid 316L stainless steel; screw-lock crown & screw-in back; crown shoulder guard; unidirectional, ratcheted bezel with 12-hour graduation/dual time. Tritium/SPO advanced illumination system on hands & numbers, Hardened mineral crystal, Calendar date window. Water resistant to 100m/330 feet. 3-year battery. Diameter 38mm, thickness 12mm; weight 4.7 oz. Bracelet in black PVD solid 316L stainless steel; deployment buckle with double lock security clasp or military nylon strap. Serial numbered.

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